WOMEN'S ANOINTED MISSION (WAM)

BY

NADJA FIDELIA

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation sheds light on the exclusion of women from congregational leadership and proposes a new model, Women's Anointed Mission, for supporting women of diverse faith traditions as leaders. Women make up more than half of the world's population, but they still trail men in various sectors of society. The purpose of this work is to examine how sexism and anger at the Creator hold both men and women back from their God-given talents. The challenge was to draw upon seemingly disparate disciplines of theology, literary theory, sociology, and gender studies, to add to the personal testimony of women and ultimately inform the solution. More than 75 women lent their voices through focus groups and interviews; and the author's shadowing of modern-day ministers revealed diverse approaches to nurturing women of faith.

Women's Anointed Mission (WAM), the outcome of my calling as a minister and of this research, is a visionary project that seeks to bring men and women together to create a space for women to develop spiritually and professionally as congregational leaders. The dissertation surveys the landscape of sexism in religious institutions, and the socio-economic impacts of sexism on women's lives. The paper considers various theologians and literary theorists who bring into focus the depth of the problem. Scriptural interpretation shows how women have been both visible and invisible in

religious texts; it also is a tool of empowerment for women congregational leaders and a starting point for reconciliation with God.

The field research and the theological and literary review reveal that women are calling to be able to use their God-given talents on parity with men, and that they desire opportunities to build networks with each other and to partner with men in their communities. WAM is one contribution among many solutions, and its priority will be providing a space for women to dialogue and practice with a multi-faith group of peers. WAM's mission, goals, and structure are outlined in this document. By creating an institutional solution to reconciliation—between men and women, and between the individual and the Creator—WAM will transform women and support their ministry in today's demanding and diverse world.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my colleagues in seminary Annette Varlack Thomas and Althea Bailey for all of their support, spiritual and intellectual stimulation, wisdom, and unconditional love; and to my mother who always taught me to believe in the power of women in the world.

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

> "If a man may preach, because the Savior died for him, why not the woman seeing He died for her also? Is he not a whole Savior instead of a half one?"[1]

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

> Despite the fact that women are more than half of the world's population, across faith traditions, women only lead 8% of 2,740 U.S. congregations studied in the 2006-2007 National Congregations Study. As a Haitian woman of faith, a licensed woman minister, a founder of a women's leadership program, and as a candidate for ordination at Grace Congregational United Church of Christ in Harlem, I have witnessed the disparity in congregational leadership firsthand through myriad experiences in diverse areas of my life. If we do not create more pastoral leadership opportunities for women, the destiny of women in leadership roles within the faith-based community will remain hindered, and we will inhibit church growth. This demonstration project will explore the nature of the problem, examine society's role, and outline the proposed project, Women's Anointed Mission, as one solution to uplift and empower women in God's service.

The marginalization of women in congregational leadership is an ongoing and serious problem, and it is our unresolved spiritual conflict with our Creator that perpetuates the exclusion of women. We can evolve a new paradigm for women's leadership and transform society by seeking reconciliation and resolution with our Creator. We also must put forward new manifestations of our talents to address the problem. Women's Anointed Mission, my proposed project, is one way to create a space to resolve the spiritual conflict, while also building the skills of women leaders through structured dialogues.

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[1] William L. Andrews, *Sisters of the Spirit* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1986), 37.

While many may believe that women have overcome discrimination, and while some may point to a few strategic appointments of women into leadership positions across various sectors, this belief is a fallacy. The exclusion of women from leadership still predominates in modern society. There is an immediate need to avoid a myopic understanding of the problem by focusing on the bigger picture and attempting to reach wholeness, on a global level, through remembering our divine equity.

Youth in the 21st century live in a world where gender inequality in leadership is the norm. While this may seem to solely work to the benefit of males, sexism also comes at a price for men, and sometimes the expectations seem insurmountable—they are expected to perform, to take care of their families and other "manly" responsibilities in every way regardless of their abilities to do so. Changing the paradigm, and showing a commitment to supporting women as congregational leaders, will be one force of many that can stop the vicious cycle. Without drastic intervention, the legacy of inequality will be bequeathed to the next generation.

Our communities must be inspired to a take on a radical liberation theology where we do not simply want to reform liberal or conservative ideas, but where we want a revolution because we are ignited by what is going on within us. We need to address the various perceptions of women in theology and in the world, and breakdown the myths that still inflict our culture with the disease of sexism to this modern day:

> Starting with the basic assumption that the male is the normative human person and therefore also the normative image of God, all symbols, from God-language and Christology to church and ministry, are shaped by the pervasive pattern of the male as center, the female as subordinate and auxiliary.[2]

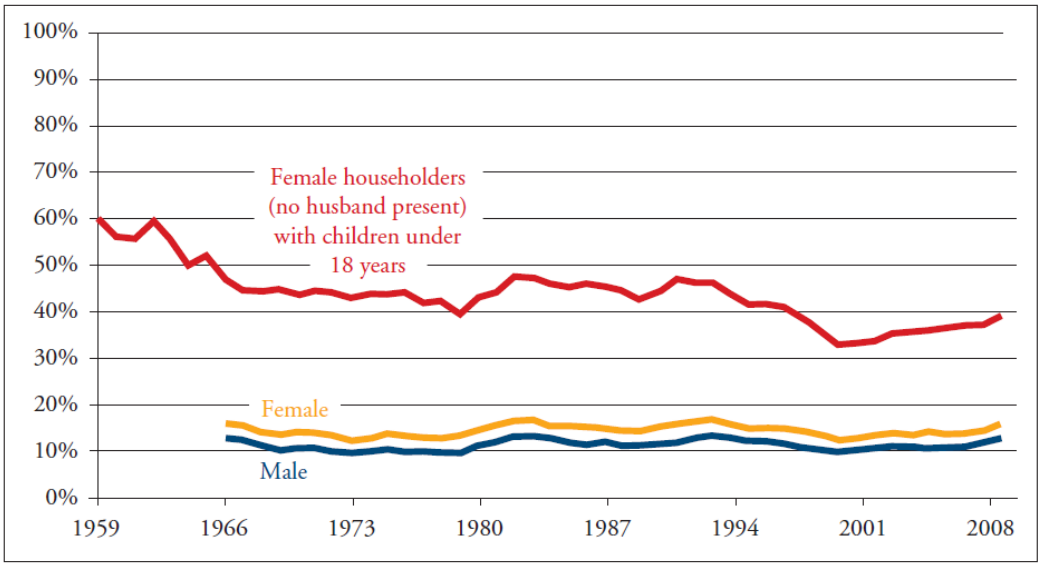
[2] Rosemary Reuthern, in *The Goddesses Mirror, Vision of the Divine from East and West* by David Kinsley (Albany, New York University of New York Press, 1989), ix.

This document suggests that communities should discard past ways and consider what is possible and then set in motion an innovative action plan.

When we look at the state of women in today's world, the challenges can seem insurmountable, even in a developed country like the United States based on data in the 2011 Women in America report. Women are facing poverty at higher rates than men:[3]

Percent in Poverty

(Percent of Each Group with Incomes Below Poverty Line, 1959–2009)



Source: Census Bureau

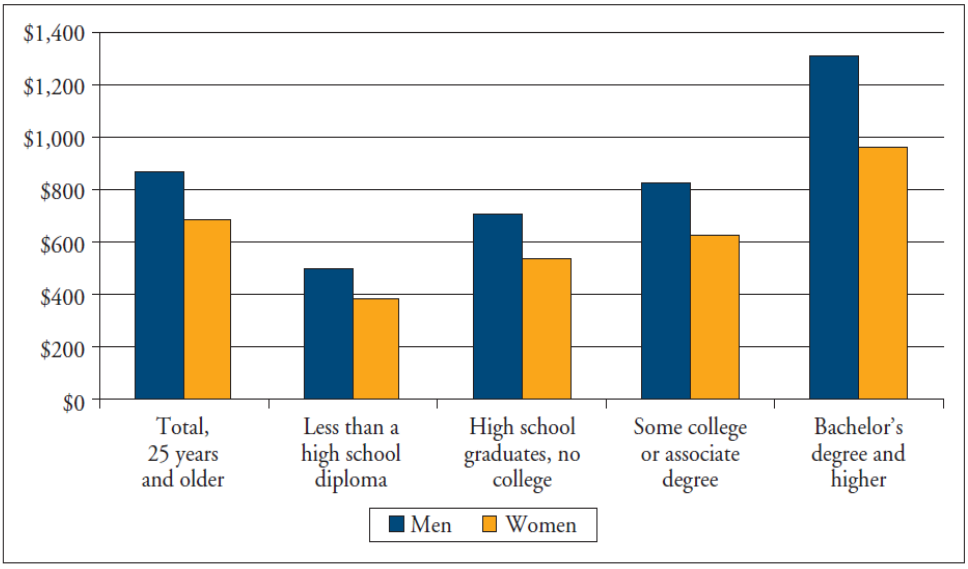
We can also see that single mothers, who are nurturing the next generation, have an even more difficult time, with 40 percent living in poverty.

[3] US Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, White House Council on Women and Girls, *Women in America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-Being*, March 2011.

Men continue to outpace women when it comes to their employment earnings:[4]

Earnings by Educational Attainment

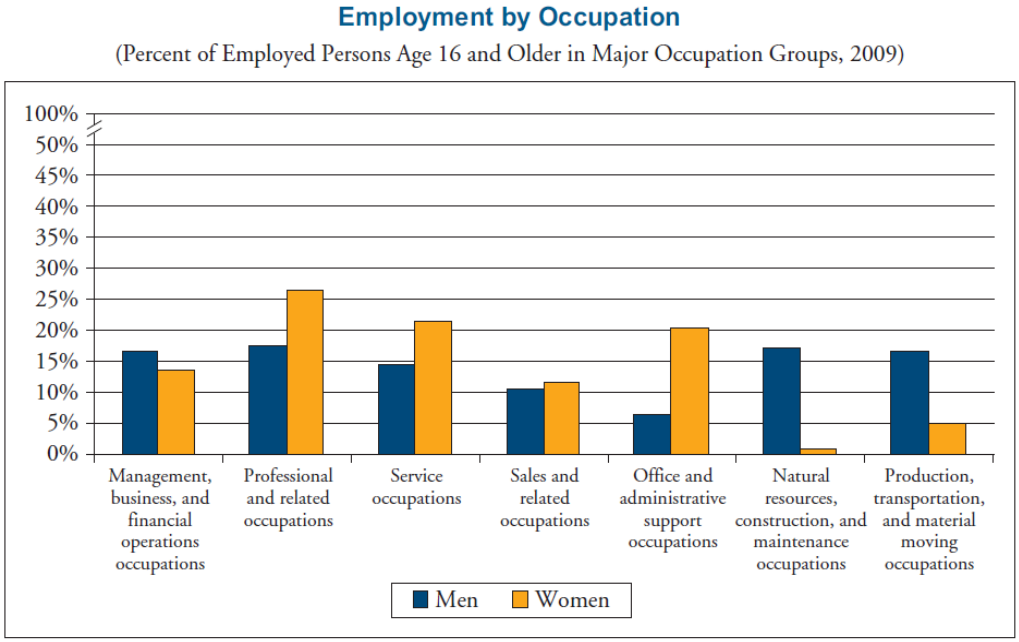
(Median Weekly Earnings of Full-Time Workers Age 25 and Older, Annual Averages, 2009)



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

[4] US Department of Commerce. *Women in America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-Being.*

The data that is most telling for the problem we face in churches is the latest statistics on which occupations men and women are employed in:[5]



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Clearly the problem of women's exclusion from specific roles in society extends beyond the pulpit. We must find solutions that address both the spiritual and social conflicts that hold women back from their potential.

The next four chapters will attempt to synthesize the hypothesis—that spiritual reconciliation and skill building are needed to change the problem of inequality in congregational leadership. I will also discuss the overarching themes that emerged from my research and focus groups. As I discuss the outcomes of my research, I will draw upon my personal testimony, and first-hand experience, and that of others to illustrate how the findings manifest in our day-to-day lives. Here are a few of the authors who have

[5] US Department of Commerce. *Women in America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-Being.*

used that model of self testimony which I found very effective: Dr. Patricia D. Bailey-Jones in *Women Risk Takers*; Teresa L. Fry Brown in *Can a Sistah Get a Little Help*; and Gloria J. Burgess in *Legacy Living.*

In Chapter II, I look at the phenomenon of women's exclusion from leadership roles in ministry and in society across a number of key sectors, industries and faith traditions. The existence of this challenge in our society, which is ingrained in our culture, allows us not even to see it as a civil rights issue against women, but as a way of life. I also discuss the conflict with the Creator and how this influences and aggravates sexism.

Chapter III will go deeper into the issue, and explore various approaches to dialogue that allow women leaders to deconstruct sexism, and to embrace their calling. In Chapter IV, I will discuss my research approach and findings. Making Women's Anointed Mission a reality will be the focus of Chapter IV, where I will look at the type of structure and vision needed to create a powerful network of female congregational leaders.

Finally, I have included various appendices related to the Women's Anointed Mission. A project timeline, budget, along with my original demonstration project proposal, are enclosed to put flesh on the proposed project, and to provide a roadmap for how it will be accomplished.

CHAPTER II:

THE MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

> Daniel 11:32,[6] is a passage in which the context is a crisis of faith, assuring us that "the people who know their God will display strength and take action." In other words, when we know God as He really is, there is power in our lives—the ability to stand firm. We are not left in a state of inertia where so many are today simply because they do not know and confidently understand the character and ways of their God.[7]

Lapsarian theology, based on the Genesis story of the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden, is commonly used to explain the whole of humanity's fall from grace with the Creator. It is a good starting point for understanding the roots of the spiritual conflict that sustains sexism. As a result of our fall from that perfect union with the Creator, men and women became divorced from the divine—distant from the Creator, and therefore distant from each other. The challenges for women congregational leaders today stem from our separation as human beings from God. Understanding this spiritual schematic can help humanity to begin seeking reconciliation in our vertical relationship with our Creator, and in our horizontal relationships with each other.

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[6] All quote references are from the *The New Oxford Annotated Bible--New Revised Standard Version with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, Third Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

[7] Kay Arthur, *Lord I Want to Know You: A Devotional Study on the Names of God* (Colorado Spring, Colorado: WaterBrook Press, 1992), x.

In my experience, women have blamed themselves for the deterioration of the relationship with the Creator. Yet this act of self-blame is paralyzing, and only a symptom of the root problem. I do not intend to blame the victim, as many do. The destiny of men and women is interrelated, and our problems are overwhelming. This demonstration project will examine one possible solution for tackling the challenge and for supporting women in leadership.

The following verse from the Christian Text, "Whatever you do, do your works heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve," (Colossians 3: 23-24) frames the challenge faced in our modern, globalized world. Our technological advances move forward at a deafening speed, increasing our ability and intelligence for serving men, or serving our material needs.

It is useful to consider the problems and solutions of sexism, alongside those of racism, because they are interrelated and there are lessons worth learning from both "-isms" that are relevant for other socio-economic challenges that we face. As Rev. Dr. J.G. McCann sees it, "Sexism is the first cousin of racism."[8] Similar to sexism, racism may seem like an idea whose time has passed. In a world so technologically advanced, sexism and racism can seem cliché and trite. However we remain a society redoing past mistakes but with a new approach.

The racial discrepancies in our society still loom large, and while the inauguration of America's first Black President, Barack Obama may have changed the face of the leader, the minds of the community are still lagging behind. Recognizing that "a closed

[8] Rev. Dr. J.G McCann, *Lift the Veil* (Kearney, New Jersey: Morris Publishing, 1998), back cover.

mind is infinitely more difficult to open than a closed door,"[9] I am not surprised that we still struggle with racism. Nor is it surprising that sexism is still a relevant and critical problem in women's lives. The failure to serve the Lord Christ, and to repair the relationship with the Creator, keeps our community and our church behind the curve.

One such example of how society remains behind the curve lies in the story of the Baptist church, which appealed in the early days to African slaves. This is because they were often treated as religious equals and promised democracy despite the restrictions of the un-churched world.[10] Ironically, the Baptist church as a denomination believed God ordained them to love all of God's children, but the church was largely giving in to the economic need to own slaves, breaching the covenant of equality.

Exclusion of women has been a problem since Biblical times and religious beliefs "not favorable to women are in the evolution of our current laws and social practices."[11] This makes exclusion of women a systemic problem. Factors that contribute to the problem are: humanity's alienation from the Creator; our state of "fallen-ness;" and the slandering of the supernatural, or a lack of faith. Some of the symptoms of the problem are: our systemic social acceptance of patriarchal society (i.e., inequitable compensation of professional women,) tension filled social relationships between the genders, and an overarching dysfunctional communication style.

Adding to the complexity of the issue, our dysfunctional world and community give us a challenging setting for creating change. We are the product of our culture,

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[9] David Baird, *A Thousand Paths to Wisdom* (Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2000), 272.

[10] Anne H. Pinn and Anthony B. Pinn, *Black Church History* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2002), 67.

[11] Pinn and Pinn, *Black Church History*, 40.

upbringing, and the interpretation of our accumulated life experiences. As children, we internalize family problems and abuse. We carry the pain into our adult life, bringing along our lack of trust, fears and anxieties. When the pain develops into patterns of negative behavior, or an adherence to negative beliefs about others, it is like a bad habit.

The habit of sexism is still thriving in today's society. According to Conner Dougherty, a recent White House report shows that women are gaining ground educationally and economically, but men still make more money on average and women are more likely to live in poverty.[12]

> Women have not only caught up with men in college attendance but younger women are now more likely than younger men to have a college or a master's degree.
>
> …
>
> Both women and men are getting married about five years later than in the past. College-educated women get married around age 30, on average compared with 26 for women with a high school diploma.
>
> …
>
> By most metrics, women are outpacing men in education in 2009; about 87% of women 19 or older had graduated high school slightly higher than men. About 28% of both men and women had at least a college degree in 2009, but women are on a loftier trajectory: In 1970 only 8% of women had a college degree, compared with 14% for men. Women between 25 and 34 years old are now more likely to have a college degree than men of the same age, and more women than men go to graduate school.
>
> …
>
> Women continue to make up a disproportionate share of administrative jobs, and lag far behind men in higher paying computer and engineering fields.

Regardless of how prepared women are for leadership, they still find themselves against the tide and getting "the short end of the stick."

[12] Conner Dougherty, "Strides by Women, Still a Wage Gap," *The Wall Street Journal*, 01March 2011, U.S. News section.

While women lag behind in society, some leaders have been and continue to uplift women's potential. Anwarul K. Chowdhury, a UN Career Diplomat, described the potential in the following way:

> Women's equality contributes to peace. They represent 50% of the world community. If the UN can ensure Respect, Opportunity, Equality, in International communities, then everything will fall in line. No society can say that they practice equality for women --- nowhere in the world can claim that.[13]

Additionally, M. Christine MacMillan, Commissioner of the Salvation Army, noted that, "Women have the essence of what we want society to become."[14] For our global context to evolve, we must have courage to transform from exclusive behaviors based in fear to inclusive behaviors based on liberation.

We need a modern day Pentecost experience in the world to push us closer to God and closer to each other:

> Christians commemorate Pentecost, when it is believed that the Holy Spirit descended upon the eleven remaining Apostles of Christ, filling them with courage and passion to go out onto the world and spread the good news. This "descending" resulted in courage and missionary zeal![15]

> Joel explicitly emphasized that when God poured out His Spirit, women as well as men would prophesy (Joel 2:28, 29). Pentecost meant that all God's people qualified for the gifts of His Spirit (Acts 2:17, 18), just as salvation meant that male or female would have the same relationship with God (Galatians 3:28). Subsequent outpourings of the Spirit have often led to the same effect.[16]

Acts 2: 1-8 describes the inspirational power of Pentecost:

> And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting

[13] Anwarul K. Chowdhury, "Forum on the Empowerment of Women" (Conference, United Nations Church Center, New York, 15 September 2010).

[14] M. Christine MacMillan, "Forum on the Empowerment of Women" (Conference, United Nations Church Center, New York, 15 September 2010).

[15] Joseph G. Bock, *Sharpening Conflict Management: Religious Leadership and the Double-edged Sword* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 111.

[16] Craig S. Keener, "Was Paul For or Against Women in Ministry?" *Enrichment Journal* (September 2010).

> asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speaking in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born?

Pentecost led to a spiritual change, and the power of the Holy Spirit allowed the people to transcend language barriers. Similarly, we need to transcend sexism so that women and men are prophesying together.

Women's leadership and their God-given gifts are not just for roles such as Chief Executive Officer and Pastor, but are for every aspect in life. Women leaders are needed as caregivers, doctors, lawyers, and more. The number of women in specific roles is not the only thing that counts, but the quality of the opportunities available to women is also critically important.

What are women not getting or missing that keeps them from expressing their gifts fully and prevents them from being all that they can be? The exclusion of women leads to overlooking their needs and well-being. In turn, violations, abuse, and oppression of women are the result of that lack of inclusion.

> There are four million domestic assaults on women. 50% of the children in foster care are there largely because of domestic violence. It costs $3.5 billion annually to put these women back together again. 60% of the women killed in the U.S. are killed by their husbands or boyfriends. [17]

A dialogue about the abuse of women in general in the world is needed to fully address their lack of congregational leadership.

We need leadership across faith traditions—communication and dialogue, and bravery—in order to address the exclusion of women. Communication is a personal,

[17] Alisa Del Tufo, *Domestic Violence* (Village Station, New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc., 1995), 51, 128.

communal and spiritual practice that is essential for ministerial transformational leadership. The church is a conduit, and disciples are mandated by God to help their community to attain a closer relationship with Him. Bravery is necessary because ultimately "God has given man a free will to decide what he will do."[18] Esther from the Bible and Mother Theresa are two brave women figures who have taken great risk with their lives to stay committed to God's calling. We need to be advocates who will risk everything for the betterment of an entire community and world.

There are many challenges that we find hard to overcome, but dialogue helps. Sexism and racism are successful because community members live in a competitive global society, and as they can become indifferent to others, their courage to reach their greater selves is stunted in the process of trying to "win." The uniqueness of dialogue rests in the fact that everyone can participate. It also does not require a specific education, language or knowledge. Therefore, engaging communities in dialogue helps every single person to feel that he or she can play a role in discovering the solution. Through dialogue, communities can educate themselves on the statistics that demonstrate that sexism is real, and they can learn to be more inclusive by hearing first-hand stories from women and by building connections with each other.

As women, we need to tell our stories and testify to inspire one another. Storytelling is powerful for women. We need to hear about the brokenness in our spirit when we are not empowered. We need to wrestle with what happens on the spiritual journey of women in their roles at churches, in homes and in our daily culture. We especially need to be aware of the challenges for women in ministry. In her book, *Can a*

[18] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchtone, 1959), 73.

Sistah Get a Little Help? Teresa Brown states that, "The great white shark in the ministerial pool is sexism. Sexism is often a solitary predator."[19] Therefore, the story becomes a powerful tool of validation, the act of telling and testimony builds connections with others which empowers the community to collectively break through the glass ceiling of sexism.

Story telling also helps to build women's self-esteem, which has been damaged through sexist systems and beliefs. Many feminists have said that "Self esteem is not everything, but there is nothing without it."[20] Women must be aware of their own fears and resentments that hold them back from their full potential.

We need to value ourselves the way that God values us so that the light within can overcome all obstacles. We need to have the passion to empower one another to be the spiritual beings that we are. For that, we need a revolution from within to defy all myths, traditions, and past circumstances that lead us astray of what is naturally good in us all.

We need to be transformed. We cannot ignore that God is here in our midst. A mantra such as, "Once I hear God, I want to take action for God, walk with God and love God," can propel us to love one another and "to see things that those who are without love cannot see."[21] In the theist faiths, God our creator, source, and guide, continues to orchestrate the evolution of humanity to new depths. God gave us Jesus Christ so that our continued sins are forgiven and that our soul may return to Him after death. Our

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[19] Teresa L. Fry Brown, *Can a Sistah Get a Little Help?* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 144.

[20] Gloria Steinem, *Dream This Day*. http:/www.dreamthisday.com/ (accessed November 27, 2011).

[21] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Love in Action: Writings on Nonviolent Social Change*, Daniel Berrigan foreword (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 1993), 10.

salvation is important to God. In that context, women's exclusion in leadership throughout society is one of those issues that requires a movement to transform society's physical world and divine spirit. We need to be called to action. We cannot change the past, and even God cannot change the past.[22] But, we can impact our present and our future.

The goal is not to reverse the order of leadership in the world, but it is to create *collaboration* between men and women in leadership roles in the church and in the world so that all of our gifts complement each other to create the peaceful, joyful world that God has intended for us. For this, society needs an innovative, inventive and solution-seeking mindset—one that is unattainable if we divide our communities with sexist practices and ideas. When men and women's God-given talents are combined, not separated, then their collective intellect and performance improves. A recent article in the WSJ highlights this collective power in the classroom:

> The more girls in a class, the better the academic performance of boys and girls, a study finds. Researchers examined students performance in Israel, in 264 high schools, 395 middle schools and about 1, 000 elementary schools, in periods ranging from 1993 to 2005. They also looked at surveys from 2002 to 2005 about students' classroom experiences. The researchers took advantage of the random, natural variation from year to year in classroom sex ratios, looking for connections with shifts in academic performance. On a battery of tests taken by Israeli 10th –graders, for example, on which the average score was 69 for girls and 63 for boys, there searchers found that a 20 percentage-point increase in the proportion of girls in a class raised boys' scores 1.6 points and girls' 1.3. This effect, while modest, is on the same scale as other much-debated educational reforms, such as reducing class size, the authors said.[23]

Both men and women need to empty themselves in order to be refilled and refueled for the journey of leadership.

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[22] Baird, *A Thousand Paths to Wisdom*, 342.

[23] Christopher Shea , "Girl Power in the Classroom," *The Wall Street Journal*, 09-10 April 2011, Ideas Market section.

The dysfunctional horizontal relationships between men and women cannot be repaired without the dual effort to repair our vertical relationships with the Creator. How we are treating our Creator is the same way we treat others. Once we make peace with that, we can ask for forgiveness, forgive the perpetrator and then we can make the situation work for us. Therefore, we need to reconcile with God and each other.

> The word reconciliation is translated from the New Testament Greek word '*katallasso*' which means "to change mutually." It is the compound of two words, '*kata*' ("pertaining to; concerning") and '*allasso*' ("to make different; to change"). Prior to its acceptance into the Christian vernacular, the word reconciliation was used by the Greeks to refer to the exchange of coins. It is still used today as an accounting term, as in "The ledger must be reconciled." [24]

We are broken because we moved away from God. Returning to the Adam and Eve story, it is the pain of our initial fall from grace and God's Eden, our distance from God, and the struggle to become closer to Him—that leaves us broken in this modern competitive world. If we remain broken we can never be at one with each other. We need to heal our anger at God so that we can collaborate and combine the best of our talents in order to lead God's children, together.

The battle to reach our full potential is even more challenging if we are not fully aware of what our individual purpose is in life. "Human beings can resist or reject God's call,"[25] but that should never be because another human being decided that you are not good enough based on your gender. Steve Jobs said so eloquently:

> Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma - which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice; and most important, have the courage

[24] David Ireland, *What Color is Your God?* (Verona, New Jersey: Impact Publishing House, 2000), 123.

[25] Douglas J. Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life* (Grand Rapids, Minnesota: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 21.

> to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.[26]

Our communities need healing and acceptance to really become global, inclusive, non-sexist and non- racist. We need an awakening and an enlightenment experience that reconnects us to our Creator so we can tap into our inner gifts and talent confidently, without human-made blockages and inner resistance to success.

[26] Steve Jobs', "Your Time is Limited," Commencement Speech at Stanford (2005), YouTube video, 0:37, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2a81LBmcMQg (accessed May, 2010).

FAITH, LEADERSHIP, AND WOMEN'S ANGER AT THE CREATOR: A TESTIMONY

> I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and, as long as I live, it is my privilege, to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live.[27]

The author Marcus Borg in his book, *The God We Never Knew,* summarizes this point really well. He said: "At the center of the biblical understanding of salvation is a relationship with God in the *present,* whose gifts are inner freedom, joy, peace, and love and whose fruits are compassion and justice. This relationship with God, and all that flows from it, are the purpose of the Christian life."[28]

I began my spiritual journey armed with the awareness of God's love and calling in my life. Like the Hebrew people in Exodus, I was forty years wandering in the desert, lost until I found the Promised Land. I had hidden my spirituality because I was afraid of the power, and the light that beamed inside of me despite of my faults, sins, and failures. I now have a true understanding of what it means to be a child of God, to be in communion with God, and to be a disciple with steadfast focus on God's mission for human creation. I began to allow the Spirit to glow throughout my life. Some saw it and followed it, while some just loved being around it. Many were blessed because of the light. Nevertheless, I did not learn to embrace it fully until seven years ago. I continued my wandering until I felt Jesus by my side, holding my hand to reveal the Lord's blessings and plans for me to use my talents.

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[27] George Bernard Shaw, *Working Minds*, http://www.working-minds.com/GBSquotes.htm (accessed November 27, 2011).

[28] Marcus J. Borg, *The God We Never Knew: Beyond Dogmatic Religion To A More Authentic Contemporary Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 167.

I have been deeply moved by the transformation in my heart, soul and spirit once I surrendered to my calling from God. Still, I am aware that not all will have a Theistic approach in their spiritual journey. Some people believe if a religion is non-theistic, it is not a religion. So, the Buddhism is considered worship or ritual but not a religion to some.[29] This difference can present a challenge in multi-faith settings, when engaging in dialogue about encouraging women as congregational leaders.

Using the word "God" in dialogue can also turn some people away if they do not want to be associated with a particular religion, especially given some of the unethical behavior and crimes committed throughout history under the name of religion.

Marcus Borg points out how his own understanding of God has evolved over his life. He describes his journey with the "BBTR model," which he defines as "Beyond Belief to Relationship." Borg explains that the goal is to be in relationship with the living God, not just focusing on believing that God exists. Borg's spiritual journey has led him "beyond belief (and beyond doubt and disbelief) to an understanding of the Christian life as a relationship to the Spirit of God—a relationship that involves one in a journey of transformation."[30]

In my own search for identity and a sense of belonging, and a need to depend on a force greater than myself, I have come to see praying as a practice of digging within for strength from the creator of our soul. Praying allows me to discern life's true meaning and my role in it. Praying provides allocated times of reflection, worship, unity and community love when done with others. Through prayer we find our story, our path, our

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[29] Lucinda Mosher, *Praying*: *The Rituals of Faith* (New York: Seabury Books, 2006), 3.

[30] Marcus J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*: *The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), 17.

understanding for our purpose in life. Whether God is essence, Oneness, Supreme Reality, or formless divine, all religions and faiths need prayer to put its beliefs in practice. This demonstration of holiness and sacredness via a worship activity such as prayer, meditation, chanting, or other forms of dialogue with God, allows us to commune with God, a religious deity, or one's own soul.

We need to step out of our comfort zone, because "those who know only their own religion know none."[31] By stepping outside of our set of beliefs and traditions, we allow ourselves intellectually to explore what we have pushed away and called the "other." This journey is taken so that we may once again find ourselves in the midst of diversity, a unity matched only by a Pentecost experience. This exploration to rid ourselves of exclusive behaviors is at the root of nurturing one of the world's most precious commodity: women.

My journey has defined my personal understanding and definition of "faith." The testimony of my life is, for me proof of God and how God works in all our lives. I could have been just another negative statistic. I was born in Haiti, raised with very little financial means, and with a father who was a political refugee. Most did not expect that I would find my way in the U.S., accomplish a successful career, establish a financially and emotionally stable family, and even give back intellectually, financially and spiritually. This is a miracle considering where I started. Linda Schierse Leonard said, "in order to confront the cynic, we must face our human propensity for despair and understand it. In despair, we lose hope and faith--two essential components needed to

[31] S. Mark Heim, *Salvations: The Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 1.

create."[32] The sum of my life experiences, combined with faith and prayer over time, has made me into a soul prepared for divine action.

As I contemplate ordination, I know it is the opportunity to say "yes" to God and to answer my calling with the full support of my church, surrounded by family and friends. It is also a chance to embrace the gifts and talents God bestowed upon me so that I may accomplish God's will. I will also launch into practice the accumulation of academic, spiritual and psychological preparation, as a cleansed vessel for the Lord's use.

We are here on earth to help heal one another before the journey back to God. Like Ezekiel, who was sent by God to warn the evil-doers in Israel, even as we sin, God sends us help and guidance via each other. In my life when I look towards the kingdom of God, I then look at life differently here on earth. I do not hold grudges or resentments against oppressors, but instead I ask myself, who am I oppressing? I do not have a need for jealousy or envy because I am secure in the knowledge that I am equal in God's eyes. I do not judge where I am in life and become envious of others because I know each of us has unique gifts and destinies. I challenge myself to focus on my own relationship with God and the quality of my own heart. In James 4:14 it says, "for what is your life? It is like a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." Therefore, I ask myself daily: how am I using the love in my heart for God and God's people during my lifetime? To be ordained and to be one of the shepherds that bring God's children back to His pasture is a privilege for me.

I see God's unconditional love for me as the mercy that I needed to live through challenging life circumstances. My calling is to share that same grace with my

[32]Linda Schierse Leonard. *Meeting the Madwoman* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 27.

community through the church as I testify to God's presence, undying love, and as I show how God works in our lives to bring us whole back in God's kingdom. I see sin and salvation as working hand-in-hand to reveal God's kindness, goodness and empathy for creation. As humankind falls from grace, God will redeem us and proclaim us His own for eternity. The church needs women chosen by God, women like me, to do the work of nurturing God's people in the community. Ordination is the critical process in which our personal responsibility to God in the world is acknowledged, held accountable and celebrated.

My call to ministry is the opportunity for me to be a disciplined disciple driven by love who seeks to understand the essential nature of everything before me. My mind must be knowledgeable in order to educate the community. Besides understanding scripture, I must also teach the people in our community self-love through the grace of God. I must awaken our multi-faith consciousness through the practice of prayer and community worship. I must learn to delight in my identity as a child of God and use that strength, and the capability of my realized self, to be a catalyst for change. I must interpret Scriptures through the lens of compassion, love, and empathy. I will call upon my language skills in Spanish, French and Haitian Creole to operate as God's vessel. Being tri-lingual positions me to touch more lives and navigate across cultures; I can have a more inclusive dialogue and invite a broader community to worship.

My greatest joy in life has been my ability to relate to people with a keen sense of their needs and wants. I am prepared to do God's work using my time, resources, prayers and academic training. My family and friends, as well as my peers, professors and colleagues at New York Theological Seminary (NYTS), have stood by me as I have

wholeheartedly and finally embraced my destiny. Most of all I am grateful to God for without divine grace and mercy, I would not have come this far.

I experience my calling as an opportunity always to empower colleagues in ministry to be a voice for the voiceless. Most of all I need to be an obedient disciple and perform a ministry in tune with God's will. I am eager to represent women's leadership abilities in pastoral service. I want to be a part of the evolution to reflect better the full contributions of all men and women whom God calls to service. Too often, I witness the lack of ordained women leaders in the church and in other faith congregations. I chose to pursue my Doctorate of Ministry at NYTS so that I could be better prepared to address this very issue. If I fail to use my talents to inspire change, then the purpose and destiny of women in leadership roles within the faith-based community will remain thwarted. Thomas Edison said it eloquently: "If we did what we are capable of doing, we would astound ourselves."[33]

I have chosen to develop Women's Anointed Mission (WAM) as a new project that will encompass a comprehensive women's intervention strategy to empower women to be assertive in taking on pastoral and other leadership roles. As a 20-year veteran of Wall Street, and as founder of a Wall Street network of over 2,000 women, I have heard the dialogue in the business community about the need to create inclusion and address systemic issues, so that women can blossom as leaders. A WSJ article that asks "Where Are All the Senior-Level Women?," gives a snapshot of how sexism operates in corporate America:

[33] Thomas Edison, "*Thomas Alva Edison Quotes,"* http://www.thomasedison.com/quotes.html (accessed October 2011).

> Why aren't there more women in senior positions, even with the best efforts of corporations? The answer is very simple. Our corporate talent pipeline is leaky, and it is blocked, Qualified women enter the work force in sufficient numbers, but they begin to drop off at the very first sorting of talent, when they're eligible for their very first management positions.
>
> So what is discouraging and holding back such highly qualified, high-motivated women? First, the familiar structural barriers; they include lack of women role models, exclusion from informal networks where connections are made, and the absence of sponsorship. Second there are lifestyles issues-concern about the 24/7 executive lifestyle and travel requirements.[34]

This woman articulately describes the continuing challenges:

> *Ms Carter:* It's important to recognize that there are different ways of building the business case. Did the financial performance of the company improve by having women on the board or in senior leadership positions? There's a good deal of research that it will show that yes, when you have greater representation of women on those boards, the companies improves.[35]

The strategy to address women's exclusion from congregational leadership requires adopting a holistic approach, one that considers how women are excluded in other roles in their lives.

Investment banking opened my eyes to societal biases that I had previously been ignorant of, and I quickly realized that my gender, and my race influenced others' expectations and perceptions of me. Many were surprised at how I was able to advance, despite the fact that I was a woman in an all-male environment. Even more surprising was that I was given access to the same jobs as my male colleagues. Throughout a career that had the potential to break me, all my challenges and challengers miraculously gave way as I rose to the highest level of the organization.

My class status changed as a result of my career successes (it was clear to me and everyone that the young immigrant from Haiti had achieved the impossible) and I began

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[34] Alan Murray, "Where Are All the Senior-Level Women?" *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 April 2011, Women in the Economy section.

[35] Ibid.

to see the world with new eyes. Faith also became increasingly vital to my lifestyle, and I eventually understood that I had a greater responsibility. God requires that I use all that I have learned to channel my God given gifts to help those who are less fortunate. Through service, I bring my calling and life purpose to fruition.

My diverse background will be an asset in shaping WAM, and I see much that God has given me—in the form of gifts and talents—that I bring to ministry. I have experience with, and a special passion for, guiding young adults to God and ministry. I have also coached over 300 young adults going through their careers in finance who were looking for a balance with their faith and ethics. I am beginning to institutionalize this practice by developing a Young Leaders Group in partnership with a seminary and faith organization. Together we are coming up with innovative solutions to support the next generation of corporate leaders. God has also blessed me with the ability to describe my spiritual journey in a way that bears witness, and helps others with their spiritual growth; I possess skills as an administrator and organizer and I have also learned a level of diplomacy, professionalism and a sensitive courtesy from my secular working environment, which is a critical competency as I work with diverse congregations.

Yet, the more experiences I have and the more I learn, the more I want and need to learn. I continue to feel as if I have only just begun to understand the spiritual transformation that is taking place in my life. I need to further develop my practice of pastoral care in order to apply my academic training to real life experiences. My further growth will also involve a continuous attempt to fully understand all spiritual disciplines so that I am better able to guide others through their spiritual journey.

I continue to practice my own philosophy of *surrenderism***,** or the total surrender to God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in every way. "It is only through actual obedience," said Boenhoffer, "that a person can become liberated to believe."[36] NYTS gave me the opportunity to achieve a full catharsis of all that is in my heart, mind and soul spiritually. Now, I move forward on my journey to begin my ministry and to put my action plan in motion.

Having said all of that and shared my enthusiastic joy to do God's will, I still wrestle with a deep feeling of anger that can only be discussed, interpreted, and overcome in the bosom of a network of women, where this discussion opens us up for healing and understanding.

The spiritual journey of Leo Tolstoy resulted in his increased criticism of the church, political establishments, and cultures.[37] Similarly, my journey has led me to critique the church and the world; and this happens simultaneously as my faith deepens. In answering his questions of where God is and what would this Deity have us do, Tolstoy brings independence and liberation to the idea of a personal relationship with God and to the idea of emulating Jesus. Jesus emphasized non-violence, love and brotherhood, and peace and harmony as the touch points for a happy life and a strong community. He taught us that the answers were within—morality, spirituality, God's love, and God's power were all within us and within our reach. Most importantly, Jesus spoke truth to power, even when it was unpopular or endangered his life. Like Tolstoy and Jesus, we need to allow the depth of our existence to inspire us to ask the tough

[36] Bonhoeffer, *The Cost Of Discipleship*, 83.

[37] Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2006), 51.

questions while traveling our spiritual journeys; only through critiquing the unpopular issues and through creating solutions can we come into a complete relationship with God.

Therefore, becoming ordained and starting WAM, is an urgent calling, because I see that women themselves have accepted certain truths about Christianity that are not their own, nor do they come from the God we serve. In *Bad Girls of the Bible*, Barbara Essex observes that, "The stories of the women in the Bible are difficult because God seems to condone their abuse, is absent, or remains silent."[38] As a result, women are angry at God, and at society at large. As women, we know the challenge of fully surrendering to God when we might have to face violence at home, hostility at church, or abuse from other women in our lives.

If God is silent as we suffer, then why should it matter if we are silent too? After Auschwitz, many Jewish women "rejected as indefensible any effort to justify God's silence," saying that "a God whose face remained hidden when the world was so dark no longer deserves our allegiance."[39] We harbor hostility towards God as we watch the world learn to behave towards women just as the Bible has: with fear, with abuse, and with a patronizing gaze that underestimates women's abilities. However, when we are angry at God, there is little we can do together that is not also filled with resentment, anguish, hostility and a strong feeling of displeasure. We make the mistake of believing that, as it is presented in the Bible, women are truly conditioned to tolerate pain, isolation, exclusion, and oppression. Thus, we sabotage our own potential.

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[38] Barbara J. Essex, *Bad Girls of the Bible* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1989), xiii.

[39] Ellen Frankel, *The Five Books of Mir*iam: *A Woman's Commentary on the Torah* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), 295.

Until we release resentment towards God, we cannot get through our own pain. When we are angry it keeps us away from God and our godliness. We are yearning to be pure and one with God. We want to know God within ourselves. It is painful to be separated from God. We need to let the pain first resonate (which requires awareness), then dissipate, so that we can be one with God. Like all humans' anger at God for having fallen from grace and being pushed from the garden of Eden, women's anger at God for punishing them in a sexist world presents a unique challenge and gets in the way as we all try to work together to create a more equal world. Although some women have overcome the establishment mindset of inequality and sexism, women as a community are not unified in their commitment to create fairer society for all.

My entire life thus far has been dedicated to creating a more fair society by living in service to my family and my community. I do not live a day without shepherding another human being. When I reflect on my daily activities, I see myself move through a myriad of roles: mentor, teacher, advocate, and healer. These are the roles I play no matter who or what confronts me, and I will bring this to my mission to lift up women leaders.

After many years of internal work I reached this stage of understanding in my life. I know that God exists in all that we do and everywhere that we are. I know that God uses the Holy Spirit to inspire and drive us to action. I am now present with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in a relationship and I am conscious of this relationship. I love myself today more than ever before. I have healed and I have learned how to become patient and forgiving. I have become unattached to people, events, material things that can harm my spiritual and emotional growth. I have let go of my fears of being poor, not

smart, and not capable. I have welcomed a new beginning of quiet confidence, love, serenity, and surrender. I appreciate the world and I am aware of my surroundings with quiet gratitude. My life is a vessel for the Lord to do the Lord's work. I am giving purposefully; I regret nothing. I am and have cleared my soul of any past shame and blame. I am renewed and I am blessed. I am aware and living out my destiny in a way where "'the sacred' is not 'somewhere else', spatially distant from us...Rather, we live within God."[40]

Some may say that our communities' transformation is already in motion, and that the world is not doing too badly. Women have advanced tremendously since the early 20th century. Today, women are educated, have choice in careers, and for the most part choose when they marry and how they raise their children.

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee, and Tawakkul Karman of Yemen—recipients of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize—are inspirational symbols that, although exclusion of women is pervasive around the world, there is still hope for women to increase their positive influence on society. In her article, "Women Working for Peace," Vivian B. Pender observed that, "most women want peace and security but [they] do not feel empowered to use their moral authority."[41] Ruth in the biblical text was a faithful daughter-in law of Naomi, and after her husband died, she returned with Naomi to Bethlehem. Ruth found her power, like the Nobel winners, to use her authority; she became a devout worshiper of the true God and brought a positive recognition to the Moabites (Matthew 1:5).

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[40] Marcus J. Borg, *The God We Never Knew: Beyond Dogmatic Religion To A More Authenthic Contemporary Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 111.

[41] Vivian B. Pender, "Women Working for Peace," *New York Times*, 13 October 2011, The Opinion Pages section.

How did powerful women such as these, succeed in spite of the challenges they faced? And what can Western women learn from some of the global role models' activities and spiritual journeys of others? If "the East and the West go through a single common crisis whose cause is the spiritual condition of the modern world,"[42] then we need to be ready to learn from women different from us, and to develop solutions that can meet women's needs across faiths. As the world transitions to a new era, so too should we repent of our sins, leave them behind, and start anew and in full glory of our Creator. Looking with new eyes at the entire global community, we can be open to different perspectives that may allow us to better understand women's potential. For example, in India, "the fact that holy women or women gurus (mataji) can exist at all in male-dominated Hindu society is due to the divine model of femaleness which the Goddess provides."[43]

[42] Huston Smith, *Why Religion Matter: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2001), 1.

[43] Alf Hiltebeitel and Kathleen M. Erndl, *Is The Goddess a Feminist?: The Politics of South Asian Goddesses* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 94.

POWERFUL WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

Before moving on to Chapter II, where I will take an in-depth look at the exclusion of women from congregational leadership, I want to review some of the examples of women's positive leadership in the Bible.

Women have always heard God's call. Despite the limitations of sexist traditions, women have also always played some role in leadership. Here are eight women prophets from the Bible:

- Miriam, Moses's sister, was a prophetess (Exodus 15:20)
- Deborah, a judge in Israel, was a prophetess (Judges 4:4)
- When Josiah was King of Judah, a book of the law was found during cleaning of the temple. Josiah commanded Hilkiah the high priest to inquire of the Lord for the king. Hilkiah then went to Huldah the prophetess (2 Kings 22)
- The prophetess Anna recognized Jesus as being the Messiah when Jesus was brought to the temple to be circumcised (Luke 2:36-38)
- The four virgin daughters of Philip the evangelist prophesied (Acts 21:8-9).

The stories told in the Bible rely on women, despite the stubborn invisibility of women's voices that predominates the text. The 10 most-mentioned women in the Bible are:

1. Sarah, the wife of Abraham, had a child when she was ninety years old. She is mentioned fifty-six times in the Bible.
2. Rachel was one of Jacob's wives. Jacob loved her the most and worked fourteen years for her father so that he could marry her. Rachel is mentioned forty-seven times in the Bible.

3. Leah was Jacob's first wife. Jacob was tricked into marrying Leah, but Leah still wins the honor of being mentioned thirty-four times in the Bible.
4. Rebekah was Isaac's wife and the mother of Esau and Jacob. She is mentioned thirty-one times.
5. The women's list also includes an infamous person. Jezebel is mentioned twenty-three times.
6. The Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, is mentioned only nineteen times.
7. Abigail, the wife of Nabal, and later the wife of King David, is mentioned fifteen times and is tied for seventh place
8. Also mentioned fifteen times is Miriam, the sister of Moses.
9. The last two women on this list are both mentioned fourteen times. Mary Magdalene knew Jesus personally and received deliverance and forgiveness from Him.
10. Hagar was Abraham's concubine and the mother of Ishmael.
11. Eve, the mother of the human race, is mentioned only four times in the whole Bible![44]

Finally, here are fifteen queens of the Bible who had recognized positions of leadership:

1. Michal, a daughter of Saul, eventually scorned her husband, King David (1 Samuel 18:20; 2 Samuel 6:16).
2. When her husband Nabal died, Abigail became a wife of David (1 Samuel 25:39)

[44] Joel L. Meredith, *Meredith's Complete Book of Bible Lists: A One-of-a-Kind Collection of Bible Facts* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 2009), 156.

3. Rizpah was Saul's concubine (2 Samuel 3:7).
4. Bathsheba became David's wife after he had her husband, Uriah, murdered. She became the mother of Solomon (2 Samuel 11:15, 17, 27; 12:24).
5. When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions (1 King 10:1).
6. Tahpenes was the wife of a pharaoh who reigned during David's and Solomon's reigns (1 Kings11:19).
7. Jezebel married King Ahab and caused him to worship Baal (1 Kings 16:31).
8. Maacah was removed from being queen because she had made an idol in a grove (2 Chronicles 15:16).
9. Athaliah attempted to destroy all the royal seed of the house of Judah (2 Chronicles 22:10).
10. The queen Vashti refused to come at Ahasuerus' command to show the people and the princes her beauty (Esther 1:11-12).
11. Ahasuerus loved Esther above all women and made her queen instead of Vashti (Esther 2:17).
12. Belshazzar's queen (unnamed) brought Daniel's prophetic gift to her husband's attention (Daniel 5:10).
13. Herodias, wife of Herod, plotted the execution of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:3-8).
14. The eunuch who received the gospel from Philip had charge of all the treasure of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians (Acts 8:27-38).

15. Though historians indicated they were not married, but were brother and sister, King Agrippa and Bernice acted as a royal couple (Acts 25:13). [45]

Clearly, women have played a role in the Bible. It is time that we lift up these examples. This type of celebration of women's leadership will be critical for lifting women's self-esteem and encouraging them on their paths.

[45] Joel Meredith, *Meredith's Complete Book of Bible Lists: A One-of-a-Kind Collection of Bible Facts*, 177.

CHAPTER III:

DIALOGUES WE NEED FOR CHANGE

Monika Mitchell, a leader in the economic advancement of women, believes that women's success "is still being measured by outdated 20th century standards."[46] Reflecting on an African proverb that says, "Women hold up half the sky," Mitchell declares, "Women do more than that; they seed and cultivate the ground we walk on."[47]

The modern-day church is shepherding God's people in a world not much different from the texts, with women nameless and absent in life and in belief systems. Where are God's leading ladies? According to the National Congregations Study of 2006-2007:

> Even though the percentage of women enrolling in Master of Divinity programs grew dramatically to over 30%, women are less likely to pursue pastoral ministry than men. Furthermore, when the women do work as Pastors, they are less likely to report satisfaction with their jobs than their male colleagues. Third, and perhaps most important, several major religious groups still do not permit women to lead congregations, and even within denominations that ordained women for decades, many congregations are still reluctant to hire women as their main clergy person.[48]

[46] Monika Mitchell-Ressler, "Forum on the Empowerment of Women" (Conference, United Nations Church Center, New York, NY, 15 September 2010).

[47] Ibid.

[48] Mark Chaves, Shawna Anderson and Jason Byassee, "American Congregations at the Beginning of the 21st Century," *National Congregations Study (NCS)*, 2006-2007: 5 http://www.soc.duke.edu//natlong/.

Sexism has been around for generations. Therefore, "the first problem for all of us, men and women, is not to learn, but to unlearn."[49]

Transformational theology, and experiential spirituality are helpful as we attempt to "unlearn." These allow one to consider Jesus as a role model, savior and guide—to consider how Jesus lived with the tension of being "God" while also being human. We need to go to the root of the religious beliefs that formed the foundations of our cultures. This exercise in critical interpretation allows one to integrate ideas from philosophy, the natural sciences, spirituality, and political science, in order to gain a deeper understanding of religion and how it shapes the world we live in.

Women need to create a support foundation, where they can assist each other in unpacking belief systems. Women must come together in faith to support each other, and they need to partner with men in their communities to encourage women's congregational leadership. As I embrace my calling and embark on a spiritual path to serve God and my community by nurturing women's leadership, I am drawing upon my vast experiences beyond the church—"A Club for the Women Atop the Ladder," a WSJ article, describes one model for supporting women's leadership in the corporate sector:

> Drawn from government, banking, technology and beyond, its members from a rare- and global power elite. Each has been tapped in Skull and Bones fashion, by an existing member. Each searched out and grooms new talent – people who can add to this group's considerable wealth, knowledge and power. It is called Belizean Grove, and if you haven't heard of it, you're not alone. Founded 12 years ago, it operates mostly under the radar.[50]
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> "We try to help each other achieve our destinies," says Susan Stautberg, Belizean Grove's founder and president of Partner.Com."We help each other in jobs, mentor each other's kids and help each other start new businesses." Women Corporate Directors is a talent bank for businesswomen, and Ms. Stautberg helps many high-ranking women build

[49] Gloria Steinem, "Women's Liberation' Aims to Free Men Too," *Washington Post*, June 07, 1970.

[50] Pamela Ryckman, "A Club for the Women Atop the Ladder," *The Wall Street Journal*, 03 April 2011, Front Page.

> their sphere of influence, but it takes more than a C-suite title to be considered for Belizean Grove. "Everyone has a phenomenal resume to get into the Grove" she says. "But it's an organization about heart, soul and spirit."[51]

Women's Anointed Mission (WAM) will draw upon best practices from networks like Belizean Grove, and build from what was learned in various sectors.

WAM also will attempt to break apart the complex and systemic phenomenon of sexism into a discussion to inspire change. Using dialogue as an approach, WAM will build an empowering network of women leaders of faith and it will address their needs in ministry so that they can fully use God's gift and successfully navigate a sexist world. In order to reach a 21st century solution, there are some frames for dialogue—some based on women's diverse roles in society—that are helpful in deconstructing women's exclusion from congregational leadership.

[51] Pamela Ryckman, "A Club for the Women Atop the Ladder," 6.

HISTORY, MYTHS & TRADITIONS

> The prophet is engaged in a battle for language, in an effort to create a different epistemology out of which another community might emerge. The prophet is not addressing behavioral problems. He is not even pressing for repentance. He has only the hope that the ache of God could penetrate the numbness of history. He engages not in scare or threat but only in a yearning that grows with and out of pain[52].

One approach to dialogue is to consider the role of culture—of our history, myths and traditions—in shaping the world as we know it. Eric Law, in his book *Inclusion*, introduces us to the systematic rules in our culture that create exclusions of the "other." He points out that even when a person fits the expected prototype and follows all the rules, he or she may still be excluded, especially if that same person is at odds with (or invisible to) the influential and powerful members of his or her society. Furthermore, our language, culture and traditions keep us well informed on how to exclude, but keep us in the dark as to how to be inclusive: "Our language, which is indicative of our cultural values, supplies a long list of expressions for exclusion but gives very little support for expressions of inclusion."[53] This system of exclusion is seldom recognized; and if recognized, then it is often disregarded, even by those who consider themselves inclusive.

As I began my research on the problem of women's exclusion from congregational leadership, some of my findings weighed on my spirit because they forced me to face my own past of being misunderstood, stereotyped, and overlooked as a woman. I had to face some of the myths fed by the same holy text that has been an integral part of my life. Barbara Essex brought some of these stereotypes to light in her

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[52] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2001), 55.

[53] Eric H.F. Law, *Inclusion: Making Room for Grace* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000), 6.

book *Bad Girls of the Bible*. She reminded us of one of the myths about female and male interaction:

> Some men date "bad" girls and marry "good" ones. Therefore women who are independent, thoughtful, and strong are often seen as "bad girls." They are not considered feminine, soft, and round; they are not considered good wife and mother material. Women have been taught to suppress themselves in order to make men comfortable--it is not good to be smart, too strong or too wise.[54]

These myths combined with many others have equated to discriminatory forces in the world and in families and churches. Our society continues to largely ignore prominent women leaders at home and in the community. In turn, women internalize the negative (or non-existent) feedback from the community, and regrettably they choose to limit their God-given talents. For men, the expectations on how they should live within their roles can also be limiting. When we accept the myths, we lose our ability to use all the gifts men and women offer to communities.

The 2004 Afghan film Osama, as discussed by Kwame Appiah, provides a telling example of how a culture's practice of religion can limit a woman's potential, leading the main character, a young girl, to dress up as a boy ("Osama") in an effort to access better opportunities:

> Osama …tells the story of the life of a girl under the Taliban, shows us women and girls driven out of public life to hide in the shadows, as murderous and moralizing mullahs seek to impose a vision of gender they claim to derive from Islam. It shows the waste of human talent: Osama's mother is doctor who cannot practice [emphasis added]. [55]

We cannot afford to lose any minds or gifted people of God if we are to further social justice or to get closer to the Creator. We must overcome biased systems and issues of low self-esteem in both women and men. Our uniqueness in our journey, personality,

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[54] Essex, *Bad Girls of the Bible*, xi.

[55] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 2006), 29.

and context can either help or hinder our potential. We need to use women's unique, and sometimes painful, experiences as a positive force.

The stories of the Episcopal Church, which officially began ordaining women in 1976; the U.S.A. Presbyterian church, which started ordaining women in 1956; and the Church of God, are useful studies of what is at stake when women's talents are neglected. Most holiness churches, including the Church of God, ordained and granted equal opportunities and offices to women from their inception. However, in recent decades, congregations have not been calling women to pastor.

Placement is an essential component of a person's calling. By recognizing someone's call to ministry while failing to facilitate ministerial placement, they effectively prevent a woman from fulfilling God's calling on her life, according to Professor of New Testament John E. Stanley at Messiah College. Rev. Dr. J.G. McCann also reminds us of the loss to the Church when it excludes women, saying that "many Churches are still suffering under the 'Veil' (bondage) of tradition today as we move toward the dawn of a new millennium. If they don't break away, they will not receive the blessings of liberation and empowerment."[56]

A dialogue in a safe environment about these negative repercussions of sexist traditions can empower women to participate in the process of "un-learning" the old ways. To unleash their power as congregational leaders, women must deepen their understanding of history and myth-making.

[56] McCann, *Lift The Veil*, 14.

SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION IN A MULTI FAITH & SEXIST WORLD

> It is important to keep in mind that what a sacred text says is one thing. How it is interpreted is quite another.[57]

Women are not a monolith, and their faith practices are just as diverse as their cultures and experiences. Our modern world is becoming increasingly global, with women interacting across cultures by choice and by accident. My own experience in learning about other faiths different from my own has taught me that we share something across differences that is both moving (a commonality of God's love, however defined), and that is troubling (a commonality of sexist traditions, such as the idea that women committed the original sin). I believe we need a dialogue among women that can span traditions and welcome all women to come together in faith and to discuss their common desire to use their God-given talents.

A dialogue around scriptural text will expand beyond Christianity for women leaders in WAM. The challenge is how to get ourselves to understand and to interpret God's kingdom in a world of many religions; a world where kingdoms and empires are being built around us with earthly focus and agendas. We must recognize that each woman has her own specific relationship to her Holy Text:

> Holy books, although venerated for their content, are also symbolic in and of themselves to the faithful: For instance, in Buddhism, the many Sutras are considered sacred; in Christianity the Bible; in Hinduism, such texts as the Vedas or Upanishads; in Islam, the Koran; in Judaism, the Torah scroll.[58]

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[57] Bock, *Sharpening Conflict Management: Religious Leadership and the Double-edged Sword*, 50.

[58] Ibid.

Each religion has its own unique cultures, languages, traditions, beliefs, and understandings of the higher power. We may worship differently under different faiths, but the commonality among all of us is that we have faith in God and that we are of the same God.

Wilfred Smith, in *People of the Book*, observes how many "Muslims pay Jews and Christians the compliment of calling them also 'People of the Book'."[59] Scripture is a common type of story across religions, and scripture tells the history of a community while offering an interpretation of the world we live in. In our world, each religion is depending on the authenticity of their respective scripture. Smith reminds us that:

> By the 3rd or 4th century, religious movements had each a book. It now became a requirement for any future movement to have a book. And, those of us that do not believe the theories of the scripture of each religion are challenged to come up with a better explanation.[60]

To me scripture plays its role as storyteller and guide for a fulfilled life, but it also is a means to evolve and transcend communities to a better way of life in today's diverse world, because "understanding religion is important fundamentally, as a clue to understanding humanity and the world."[61]

Smith challenges us to question all that we read despite the fact that some authors claim it is God's word written verbatim. He says that "everything that exists on earth, has come into existence historically, [therefore] we should question how they came to existence and lived for so long."[62] Scripture is life when we wrestle with its contents to

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[59] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *What Is Scripture?: A Comparative Approach* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2005), 47.

[60] Ibid, 51.

[61] Ibid, 238.

[62] Smith, *What Is Scripture? A Comparative Approach*, 45.

create communities as we practically try to live day by day. We challenge what was, so that we can define what is. Philosophers have played a great role challenging the status quo of the role of religion and its proper location in our history, though they could not agree where that curiosity is generated. According to Smith, "Plato emphasized it was because of our love of truth and Aristotle emphasized our 'impulse to know'."[63] What we can all agree with is that if we do not treat scripture as a form of telling our communities' history and as a vehicle for evolving and transcending traditions, we may fail to see that scripture is figurative, not a literal truth.

As a minister, my ability to love scripture for its figurative qualities allows me to find God in places beyond the confines of holy text, and in people in all corners of the world. My own journey to learning about other faiths has evolved over time and it has deepened my knowledge of people, cultures, and scripture.

When I first attended a Hindu Temple, I was amazed that after practicing Siddha Yoga for over six years, I had never fully appreciated the Hindu worship behind my meditation practices, such as the recital of the Guru Gita daily. I have learned that being open to my ignorance and to new experiences, gave me a fuller understanding of the spirit within me. Many people around the world are like me, and they follow the meditation and spiritual practices of the Hindu tradition despite the fact that they are not observant Hindus. What is the meaning of that interconnectedness in a multi-faith setting and how can we learn and duplicate this phenomenon? This is where dialogue becomes essential to facilitate sharing of cultures and traditions, and to help people of different backgrounds find a space of connection.

[63] Ibid, 33.

At the Temple, I experienced a deep respect for all creation. I felt holy just being part of this environment full of rituals and discipline. This, coupled with a welcome filled with servitude and honor, made this visit a priceless time. I left wanting more of their daily routine in my life.

At a Korean Methodist Church, a community that shares my Christianity but with a different culture, I was thoroughly impressed by their strong sense of community. At a Sikh Temple, I was humbled by their commitment to staying connected globally. I learned a lot about resilience and faith; it was an eye opener about a tradition that I used to perceive as the "other."

These experiences will enable me to shape dialogues within WAM that consider multiple histories and the various ways that women relate to holy texts. Communities' relationship to scriptures is part of what shapes their identity. In *The Goddesses' Mirror*, Kinsley David discusses Rosemary Reuther and the influence of the male gaze in scripture:

> Western culture presupposes that the sex and color of the divine is male and white. This presupposition is inherited and still being maintained, by the three great sister religions of the West: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rosemary Ruether says: "Starting with the basic assumption that the male is the normative human person and therefore also the normative image of God, all symbols, from God-language and Christology to church and ministry, are shaped by the pervasive pattern of the male as center, the female as subordinate and auxiliary."[64]

Although challenging, we must take what was written a long time ago and apply it to our current context; even when it is clear that text was written by men.

"Women are first to sin and second in creation," says Sue Monk Kidd in her book *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*. Kidd helps us wrestle with the journey of women and their roles in churches, homes, and cultures. She highlights the challenges women

[64] Kinsley. *The Goddesses Mirror, Vision of the Divine from East and West*, ix.

must overcome to live and achieve their full potential, "some of which are: an inferiority complex that something intrinsically is wrong with them; thus, women are generally absent, in the background, or devoid of power in the Bible therefore void of role models."[65]

Many scriptures have been used against women and advocate women's exclusion from leadership. For example, the Christian Bible scripture I Timothy 2:8-11 (NRSV) provides the following direction to men and women on how they should conduct their lives:

> I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument; also that the women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. Let a woman learn in silence with full submission.

Many also use Paul in the Christian Text to support their argument that women should be excluded from ministerial leadership. The text however speaks another truth and points to the flaws of misinterpretations:

> Although Paul ranked prophets second only to apostles (1Corinthians 12:28), he Acknowledged the ministry of prophetesses (1 Corinthians 11:5), following the Hebrew Bible (Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:13, 14) and early Christian Practice (Acts 2:17, 18; 21:9). Thus those who complain that Paul did not specifically mention women pastors by name miss the point. Paul rarely mentioned any men Pastors by name either; he most often simply mentioned his traveling companions in Ministry, who were naturally men; Paul's most commonly used titles for these fellow Laborers were "servant" and "fellow worker"--both of which he also applied to women (Romans 16:1, 3); given the culture he addressed, it was natural that fewer women could exercise the social independence necessary to achieve positions of ministry; Where they did, however, Paul commended them and included commendations to Women apostles and prophets, the offices of the highest authority in the church.[66]

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[65] Sue Monk Kidd, *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter: A Woman's Journey from Christian Tradition to the Sacred Feminine* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996) 26-28.

[66] Craig S. Keener. "Was Paul For or Against Women in Ministry?" *Enrichment Journal* (September 2010).

Through interpreting the text in-depth together, women can use this dialogue to heal the past and also find inspiration in the examples that do exist of women's leadership being upheld.

My experiences with other religions influenced my interpretation of scripture. I was born into a Catholic family, but as I traveled through life, I was exposed to various paths to spirituality and God. Being exposed to and even practicing spirituality through various worship styles, denominations and cultures opened my eyes to the world. For example, just when I thought I had done it all and felt closest to God, I was spiritually led to meditation through Siddha Yoga. Practicing meditation and yoga offered moments for reflection. Through these practices, I saw my journey clearly, from being a child in the spiritual garden who ventured to the uncharted forest of American, to growing into an adult who has rediscovered her spirit and who has survived life with faith and prayer. Yoga and meditation, combined with my Christian practices, helped to bring me closer to the Creator in novel ways.

After many years of opening my heart to people with diverse backgrounds and investigating the different beliefs and customs, I realized that I need not stay in a path laid out to me by birth (Catholicism), and that I should choose for myself a spiritual practice that most closely reflects my principles. Being open to other traditions changed my faith positively, and ultimately I came to believe that there is one God, but there are many different religions or interpretations of God's power and of events.

Dialogue that fosters critical interpretation of scripture will be a key element of WAM. To me, this is essential to Biblical interpretation so that we can tell people the good news of the sacred text, because:

> By God's grace, all men and women who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ receive spiritual gifts to equip them to serve together in Christ's body-the church. God grants these gifts through God's Spirit to all believers without distinction and for the edification of all (1 Cor12:4-11). No member of Christ's church is unneeded; each is gifted by God's will so that the church, though many parts, may be one body (1 Cor12:12-26).[67]

Critical interpretation allows us to take into account the context, audience, and writers of the various religious texts. When reading and interpreting such texts, one must understand that even as we read what is written, we bring to it our own stories, our own understanding of life, our own stereotypes and illusions.

Hermeneutics reveals the humanity of God and empowers congregational leaders to spread God's word. It allows us to take stories from the past, and apply them with fresh relevance to our present and future. There are parables throughout the text that are timeless, yet each person who reads it takes away his or her own unique lesson. As an element of WAM's programming, scriptural study will function as a compass to direct women towards a closer relationship with God.

[67] Randy Stinson and Christopher W. Cowan, "Women in Ministry: Practical Application of Biblical Teaching," *JBMW* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2008), http://www.cbmw.org/Journal/Vol-13-No-1/Women-in-Ministry-Practical-Application-of-Biblical-Teaching (accessed November 27, 2011).

THE ROLE OF TRUTH

Why in the twenty first century do we still have women omitted or present in a very small scale in leadership roles? We are reminded that just decades ago, almost all industries were "non-traditional" for women. However, with liberation through education, so much has changed. Women not only work across fields, but are business owners in fields that were not open to them before. Still there are scriptural themes, understandings, or passages have been neglected or misunderstood so as to contribute to the persistent sexism. The article, "Where is the Truth in the Blended Pudding?," is a good starting point for a dialogue on truth.[68] Women leaders in WAM will look at what truth is essentially, and at who holds the key to truth's definition in the religious setting.

After reading John H. Berthrong's view and reflection on historical data on how truth has been interpreted, packaged and sold,[69] I have come to accept Alfred North Whitehead's perspective on this long debate, specifically when he concluded that "none of us, nor any one religion, will ever have the whole truth because we would then be equal to God."[70]

Truth is found in our traditions and norms, and basically in what everyone does. It is ingrained in our behaviors and ideologies even through some truths may no longer be valid in the modern context. It is my view that truth without dialogue is like reading a sacred text literally without exegesis and then believing that one holds the entirety of

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[68] John H. Berthrong, *The Divine Deli: Religious Identity in the North American Cultural Mosaic* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 24.

[69] Berthrong, 47.

[70] Alfred North Whitehead, *Science Quotes,* www.lhup.edu/~dsimanek/sciquote.htm (accessed August 2010).

religious truth. We develop an ability to grow and transform as a community by being open to learning from different truths.

Leaders are those who challenge the status quo to bring about change to what a community calls its truth. WAM will invest in women congregational leaders who seek to challenge the perception of truth held by others in big and small ways. It will empower them to push their communities to question truths, especially those that result in social ills like sexism, as a way to get closer to God.

MULTICULTURALISM AND THE CHURCH

> Holy Qur'an 49:13: O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other).

One of the questions that women leaders will explore through WAM is: What is the role of our congregations as we deal with a multicultural world? WAM will provide a forum for women leaders to discuss the unique challenges presented by multi-culturalism.

For some who practice religion, their mission in life is to convert as many souls as possible. However, having conversion as the primary motivation for sharing God's work makes religion a territorial exercise, where the territory is defined by the accepted truths and practices of the dominant religion.

Holding a purist perspective on religion limits a leader's ability to find common ground with others, and it also puts peace and peaceful communities out of reach. At the same time, the need to evangelize and to share the joy of one's God with others is a natural extension of faith. WAM will avoid asking women of faith to convert to one religion while welcoming those women for whom the evangelical approach makes sense. It will be a space for women across religions to come together and share suggestions on leading congregations where multiple cultures are present.

Some faith leaders who are primarily focused on raising their numbers through conversion of others from different religions and denominations may get more people signed up for their churches, but they may also shortchange the chance for congregants to have a deeper relationship with God, not a blind one constructed in haste. Allowing room for diversity requires time, courage, and an ability to work with disagreement, from leaders who aim to convert. WAM will create a safe space for women congregational

leaders to take on these difficult conversations and to share and uplift the lessons from evangelicalism.

In the article "Lifelong Call to Learn," Rabbi Baird, says that "as we travel the path toward greater understanding of other religions, we will grow in our own relationship to God."[71] Each religion brings with it a set of truths, and when we are interacting with another faith, we lean on our interpretation of tradition and our religion from our own belief system for truths, understanding and expectations.

Kwame Anthony Appiah's book *Cosmopolitanism*[72] discusses the challenges of multiculturalism. He is careful to show us how we have developed our arrogance and convinced ourselves that we are best positioned to pass judgment on each other and on other cultures. This is ingenious because one society can become dominant over another by convincing the masses that their neighbors' actions are either right or wrong depending on which way they would like to manipulate the whole of society.

Cosmopolitanism is a mirror for us to reflect on our history and to come to terms with how we as a society have used judgment to divide communities, to create proof of a people's inferiority, and to overpower other people and cultures. The United States is often criticized by its global neighbors for being ethnocentric, or for forcing "Western" ideas onto other cultures. Sometimes we (Americans) claim that God is on our side in the effort. We look at cultures that have different values or laws that are not as "advanced" as ours— we even see them as "backwards" or "uncivilized" or "heathens." I am aware that Americans are not a monolith, and that not everyone thinks in this way. The problem

[71] Rabbi Justus Baird, "Case for Multifaith Education," *Religion in a Multifaith World* (March 2010), http://www.auburnseminary.org/thecase?newsid=275 (accessed November 27, 2011).

[72] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 2006).

occurs when we market these beliefs in our communities so intensively so that when people migrate from these other cultures, they are at risk of being ridiculed, isolated or marginalized. This manipulation does not just rest in our conduct as Americans, but in communities across the globe. In each of our own worlds, it has been our pattern that we must strictly delineate "right" and "wrong" so that the masses can have a unified behavior.

Appiah points out that we often ignore that "what makes oppression possible is that there are people who profit as well as people who suffer."[73] If we look back at slavery, the Holocaust, and other atrocities; and if we also consider our greatest moments as humanity; we can see that there is/was a reward-punishment mechanism to mold communities to adopt a singular view. It takes a conscious effort to remain authentic in the midst of such a data-filled world, where some of the more dangerous theories that divide us have been proven by philosophers, scientists, researchers, and spiritual leaders, therefore reinforcing those core beliefs.

We have learned to academically discredit one another's discoveries to satisfy our own beliefs. This is not so different from the way we dismiss a faith other than our own because after our own research which comes from our life experiences and culture, we disagree with their set of beliefs.

A dialogue between women leaders in WAM on cultural imperialism and multiculturalism will be enlightening. It will stress that even in everyday life—whether we are aware of it or not—we impose and transport our ideas to one another. We can address the multicultural and multi-faith challenges simply by showing up in the world

[73] Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, 29.

with a mind open to the infinite possibilities of mankind, and a soul open to the search for human spiritual connectedness.

THE ROLE OF POLITICS

Religious and political beliefs are intertwined because they both are concerned with determining right from wrong. Often, political influence is a critical factor in creating more inclusive environments. And in many Black churches, the congregational leader is also engaged politically in his or her community. We have a duty as spiritual leaders to be active in our communities. We must constantly reach out and engage the community through service.

Although I strive as a person to be non-political, I understand that my calling pushes me to speak truth to power, and sometimes this will require me to get involved politically to serve my community and to change society so that we all can be in closer relationship with the Creator. As a minister, I must at all times be a proactive leader who plays different roles: mentoring parents to effectively deal with domestic issues; giving priority to youth to encourage their growth in both scripture and academic pursuits, and working with our governmental leaders to make decisions that incorporate the love of God towards all people.

Since the writers of our Sacred Texts, as well as the expert exegetes, are human and subject to the political influences of their times, as I read different Bible passages, I receive the information with skepticism. Opening a dialogue among the women in WAM about the role of politics and its influence on faith will help them to better interpret holy text, and lead congregations. We need to learn how to consider the context in which writers wrote holy books, such as who the writer was, the audience he/she was writing to, etc.

A dialogue about politics will necessitate that we also take into account how our families of origin shaped our political and religious selves, thus coloring also our understanding of holy texts. My family respects religion and understands its role in our society. They all read the Christian text and have become experts in their interpretation of certain passages. Their drive for doing so is not coming from blind faith, but from their struggle with keeping faith when faced with unending uncertainty. My family members are believers by tradition, but not by intellectual acceptance and interpretation.

I am sure that this intellectual curiosity taught me how to take my faith more seriously by recognizing that because of the role of politics, nothing can be accepted blindly in faith. A curiosity about religion will be central to WAM. This does not mean that we cannot count God's blessings and celebrate our sacred texts; instead, we will ask for more blessings by facing the political realities of the world God has given us, and then using our talents to create change.

LITERATURE AND LITERARY THEORY

> You cannot know where you are going if you do not know where you have been.
> ~ African proverb

In addition to dialogues on history and traditions, scriptural interpretations, multi-faith approaches, multiculturalism and political influence, we also need to take into account the role of literature and theory in shaping our society. In Jonathan Culler's book *Literary Theory*, he discusses the role that literature plays in helping people accept their place in life, and accept the arrangement of society. He also acknowledges that literature can also challenge the norms of our society. Literature tells us "who we are as a community."[74] It leaves us with choices of whether we accept the description of our behavior, or not. A dialogue on literature is important to faith because literature can be a form of testimony from different eras in our culture.

Literature, according to Culler, is also a way for people of different backgrounds to get an opportunity to learn about the "other" in a safe environment open from judgment; it is supposed to make us "better people." What I find most fundamental is that it reveals to us how we are manipulated although we do not realize it. I agree with Culler that "ruling groups dominate not by *force*, but through the structure of consent" [emphasis added].[75] If we accept what is a given in our society, we are living life in a passive agenda and therefore we are not part of the leadership affecting change for those who are experiencing injustice. It is what is in practice that we should judge not just the rules.

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[74] Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 47.

[75] Culler, 37.

WAM will take the role of literature into account, and it will also look at the role of theory in general. Engaging with theory changes our perspective and views and, as Culler points out, makes us challenge what we consider common sense. To question common sense is to say that even when we know for sure what we believe, theory makes us realize that this belief ultimately came from somewhere outside of us. It challenges us to be self aware and to seek a more authentic belief that is our own, thus bringing us into a richer relationship with the Creator.

Theory is very helpful to hermeneutics because of its speculative nature. "Theory is about staying open and accepting that we may not know everything;"[76] it is an opportunity to bring things out of the text that would otherwise be missed. The invitation of the Christian gospel is to enter into that intimate relationship with God in which we can embrace our healing and finally experience our wholeness, and that relationship transforms us by first healing our wounds so we can live in the here and now with God.

WAM will introduce participants to theorists like Claudia Camp, Judith Plaskow, and Asma Barlas. These theorists use feminist hermeneutics to address the sexism in sacred texts.

Barlas discusses how the study of language and forms plays a role in shaping women's sense of self. In what we say, what we read, and what we are being told, if women are invisible, then it leads to low self-esteem. Word games in any text can lead to a benefit for one gender group over the other.

[76] Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, 16.

Camp's perspective on "God as a Patriarchal oppression"[77] is revealing because she observes that a patriarchal text read in a patriarchal culture will never self-correct. To me, this explains why it is so difficult for women and men activists who are actually trying to change the gender imbalance seem to only be able to "move the needle slightly." Sexism is in every fiber of our society in a way that it feels almost impossible to break its roots. Camp puts forward that the way around this is to engage people in conversations with holy text.

Plaskow introduces us to the dynamics of the Jewish community's transformation to address this gender issue by not only allowing women to read, study and engage the sacred books, but they are also giving women more leadership roles in synagogues. Plaskow highlights women's nature to not speak up even when given the opportunity. The Jewish community sees the need to create an environment that lets women feel safe to unleash their own potential.[78]

The perspective of these theologians has enlightened me and evolved my own theology and argument on some of the facts and assumptions explaining this phenomenon. This type of engagement with feminist hermeneutics will give WAM women the key to deconstruct the erroneous interpretations of sacred texts that have kept women out of their rightful place in the global dialogue. This is also one more step towards healing women's anger at God.

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[77] Stephen E. Fowl. *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1997), 53-69.

[78] Judith Plaskow, "Beyond Egalitarianism," in *The Coming of Lilith*: *Essays on Feminism, Judaism, and Sexual Ethics 1972-2003*, ed. Donna Berman (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2005), 128-33.

Having a personal relationship with God helps us discern what we are placed in this earth to do. As Christians, some of us fall away from living together in Christ because we lose faith. Some say, "well God does not always catch me when I fall," and that erodes our faith. Oftentimes crisis is the greatest motivator to look for and seek God, and "the more you experience God's presence, the more satisfying your life becomes."[79] We as humans are not perfect, yet still, we are not born with high moral character. Our life journey is about developing character. Literature and theory enable us to get closer to the Creator as we travel this path.

[79] David Ireland, A*ctivating The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit* (New Kensington, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House, 1973), 164.

CHAPTER IV:

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH; CRAFTING A SOLUTION

How do we include female voices at the leadership level and use advocacy to disrupt this unjust societal norm? We need to remember the covenant with God and "co-labor" with grace.[80] We made a commitment with God to work with each other, to lean on one another, and to allow God's presence via the Holy Spirit to guide our actions. The exclusion of women would not be God's way for it defies what Jesus has taught us about God's unconditional love.

As we craft solutions, we must ensure that men are not forgotten, and that their needs are met so that they can be supporters of women leaders. Women need to anchor their value systems on God and partner with men as equals. Monika Mitchell-Ressler observes that women often feel valuable in the support role but not in the leadership role. It is her view that we act like we belong to men and not to God.[81] This view may come from the creation story of various texts. Women need to step up and take control of their destinies in institutions like the church.

My ministry, the Women's Anointed Mission (WAM) will help "write off" the past and give women leaders a fresh start. We will teach women to take responsibility

[80] Ireland, *Activating The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit*, 65.

[81] Monika Mitchell-Ressler, "Forum on the Empowerment of Women" (Conference, United Nations Church Center, New York, NY, 15 September 2010).

for their own limitations, and to succeed in spite of them. This can be accomplished through healing, forgiveness and self-love. Once we help ourselves individually, we can pull others up along with us. Everything we do is a reach for God's goal and reach for something we never experienced nor have tasted.

THEOLOGIASN WHO FOUGHT FOR CHANGE

> If we truly want to be specific about religion, we must try to look instead for the "ever present causes" on which religion rests, the things that at all times and places push people to believe and behave in religious ways.[82]

In Galatians 2:20, the prophet Micah reminds the readers that God wants us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. "Jesus, being a spirit person, healer, and wisdom teacher, was a social prophet and had passion for social justice and protested against systemic evil. Systemic evil is an important notion: it refers to the injustice built into the structures of the system itself. Embedded in oppressive and exploitative social structures, systemic evil is a major source (perhaps the single greatest cause) of human suffering."[83]

To end the problem of women's exclusion from leadership, we will need bravery and faith. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Archbishop Oscar Romero, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Reinhold Niebuhr, and other theologians in our history have exemplified these qualities and they have challenged the status quo in unique and distinct ways. Their contributions help us to understand what is necessary when we must take just action as leaders. Women leaders can benefit from learning from theologians so that they can unlock their own potential as ministers in a world where it can feel like God has forgotten our pain.

Theology and ministry both play critical roles in our society. I believe that everyone is born with the capacity to know God and to be like God and to identify with God. Our spiritual development is dependent on our own life experience, and we can

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[82] Daniel L. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 97.

[83] Borg, *The God We Never Knew*, 141-142.

choose to move closer or further away from God. In today's world and in the United States in particular, with its ardent separation of church and state and church and education, God and spirituality seem to be more and more absent from people's lives. Some are confused about the role of God and/ or spirituality in their daily lives, with faith being tapped into only in times of crisis. Some expect that God will save them from their miseries and protect them from oppression, but quickly blame God for abandoning them when they face injustice in the real world.

Ministry is a means to right the wrongs that resulted from our sins and shortcomings along the journey (such as pride, dishonesty, and low self-esteem.) Theology opens us to continued learning along the way; a process that can deepen our relationship to the Creator. We need women's talents so that we have all of our God-given gifts employed to nurture a ministry driven by love and one that seeks to question and understand the essential nature of everything.

Dr. Martin Luther King's theology had the love of humankind at the core of his argument. From the time of his youth, King was raised in the Preacher's home where he learned that there is a God of Love. "He who hates does not know God," said King, "but he who has love has the key that unlocks the door to the meaning of ultimate reality."[84] For King this was the core of his faith which became the core of his message that there is strength in love.

King was a student of the Bible with a passion for morality and ethics. He repudiated violence, stating that "if we assume that humankind has a right to survive,

[84] Congress, Martin Luther King Jr. Famous Sermons and Public Addresses, *Congressional record 105* (20 May 1959): 8696-97, 250.

then we must find an alternative to war"[85] In order for King to reach his full potential as a leader, he had to personally transform as well—he had to surrender to God's will and overcome a fear of death in order to complete his work under constant threat. Once he surrendered to God's will, fear no longer was an obstacle, and King was able to achieve the impossible.

King's view on the church was that it is the body of Christ[86] , similar to what the Christian text describes in 1 Corinthians 12-14:

> For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

Therefore he felt disappointed by the un-Christ-like behavior exhibited by his colleagues at the time; King was left to ask the unpopular questions on his own.

Similarly, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was disappointed by his clergy peers who disagreed with his choice to take an anti-war position and to challenge the government authority at the time. Driven by his religious fervor, he would eventually embrace secular approaches to tackling the problem of war. While Bonhoeffer debated and questioned the role of war in Christianity, the dialogue he sparked was as a way to take action in what he believed was an immoral situation.

Bonheoffer's theology was based on recognizing the transformative power of crisis and Holocaust. He identified "incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection as the dynamics of all reality and the forming forces of true selfhood."[87] Theology is a vehicle

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[85] (U.S. Congress, 1959, 8696-97), 42.

[86] Ibid., 301.

[87] Larry L. Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1972), 90.

for evolving an ethical stance during turbulent times, and to challenge us to return to God (and to stop the killing and maiming).

Faith leaders like King and Boenhoffer became champions and catalysts of change because they believed in a transformational theology, and because they understood the significance of experiential spirituality. These beliefs enhance ministers' ability to discern God's voice in dialogue with the community, and to inspire others to participate in a cause that transcends egotistical behavior.

By making their ministry into an action plan, King and Boenhoffer's voices made a difference: "When God's Call harmonizes with our giftedness, we become candidates for lasting achievement."[88] Regardless of the challenges, they were facing, they acted on their purpose head-on with faith in God, to the extent of becoming martyrs for the liberation of their people.

With the freedoms in religion that are stipulated in the U.S. Constitution, one might think that progressive language would have extended to actual practice, and to a general freedom in other areas of our lives. However, as Charles Ringma notes in his discussion of Boenhoffer:

> Man controls this process just enough to disturb in the harmony. The men who control and own the machines become the wielders of social power on a vaster scale and of more dynamic quality than previous history has known. They cannot resist the temptations of power any more than the older oligarchies of history. But they differ from previous oligarchies in that their injustices are more immediately destructive of the very basis of their society than the injustices of a less dynamic age.[89]

This is the type of Christian realism that must first be accepted in order to practically help those who are less privileged.

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[88] Charles Ringma, *Seize the Day with Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Piñon Press, 2000), 29.

[89] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 67.

In our capitalist world of "haves" and "have-nots," King challenged this unfair system; in his context, preaching morality and spirituality alone would not be sufficient to drive social change. Therefore by accepting a form of Christian realism, and by recognizing people's shortcomings and their drive towards self-interest, we as leaders can more effectively motivate others to make decision that are more fair to do the right things.

Oscar Romero, who saw martyrdom as a grace from God that he did not earn, is a great role model, showing us how to put realism into practice.[90] Romero's philosophy was that he wanted Christians, including the clergy, to be involved in the process and not try to avoid the most difficult aspect[s] of [social transformation].[91] "Romero knew how to bring faith and episcopacy – personal charisma and the institution together," according to Sobrino; "it was a remarkable gift and an uncommon one." [92]

He believed that his role in the church was to speak truth to power and speak it to anyone who could help his people. Although he did not want the church to take on a role in politics, he wanted the church to always be at the table ensuring that there was a voice for the voiceless. Romero saw himself as God's advocate, bringing humanity together to address the needs of the San Salvadorian people. He tirelessly spoke up on issues and took risks to save others. He saw it as his duty because he loved and wanted to obey God. He felt that he was promoting the will of God by asking for compassion and mercy on behalf of the poor.

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[90] Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 51.

[91] Jon Sobrino, Ignacio Martin-Baro, "A Theologian View of Oscar Romero—Voice of the Voiceless," http://flyingfarther.wordpress.com/category/oscar-romero/ (accessed August 15, 2008).

[92] Sobrino, Martin-Baro, 29.

We must use our hermeneutics and all that we are, heart, body and soul—to become transformational leaders like Romero in our society. A society without religion would never succeed as long as we are human. There must be a medium to not only connect and reconnect us to God and His teachings, but also to hold us accountable for our sins.

King's message of love and non-violent protest, Romero's undying faith in God's will, and Bonheoffer's ethical and moral standard for himself, illustrate the type of urgent passion that sparks when we hear God's calling. This calling challenges our own tendencies to take control of circumstances around us especially during crisis which all of these theologians were facing.

I am inspired by their approach as a model, and it reminds me of other models from the Bible that I seek to emulate. Like Esther, I think beyond myself to focus on the betterment of all. Like Rahab, I am willing to take risks in order to effect change. Like Mary, I am willing to study and learn. The maturity in my spirituality has many layers. I am in constant discovery which requires me to listen intently to my inner voice, and to discern the content of God's call on my life. I know that this inner drive to make a difference is God's voice and the Holy Spirit guiding me towards my purpose.

As all of us try to transcend, and understand our purpose and the role that Jesus Christ plays in guiding us, we are faced with a big challenge: human's hunger and egotistical need to leave a legacy:

> Man is insecure and involved in natural contingency; he seeks to overcome his insecurity by a will-to-power which overreaches the limits of human creatureliness. Man is ignorant and involved in the limitations of a finite mind; but he pretends that he is not limited. He assumes that he can gradually transcend finite limitations until his mind becomes identical with universal mind. All of his intellectual and cultural pursuits,

> therefore, become infected with the sin of pride. Man's pride and will-to-power disturb the harmony of creation.[93]

Some people believe that achievements and wealth are more important than salvation, and sometimes these beliefs are even promulgated by religions and the church. The extreme manifestation of this fallacy is a person who does what appears to be good not for the benefit of others, but for his or her own self-benefit.

No matter what we do—no matter how much we achieve intellectually, financially, spiritually, emotionally, and scientifically—it is and will always be because of God and His role in our destiny. We need to let go of that need for control and recognize that the credit, the legacy, the glory is only for God. A true transformational world is one that is fully surrendered to the will and desires of God for the benefit of a greater world. Jesus is a great teacher in humility:

> Jesus made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phl 2:7-8)

If we completely surrendered to the will and glory of God, there would be no lack of inclusion, there would be no violence, and there would be no desire to outdo each other. Striving towards excellence can still exist within this approach, which I call *surrenderism*, the ability to live and be in sole obedience to our Creator.

Religion's purpose is to teach the holy text, to create a safe space for meditation and listening to God's Word, to commune and create community, and to share the good news of God's love for people. In the Christian faith, it is to further teach the discipline of Jesus Christ. This is done in order for people to be aware of the God within. In this

[93] Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 127.

way they are able to nurture their spirituality and life experiences and reach their full potential.

Ministry is the stimulus and the inspiration that inspires social participation and equality. Ministry can bring people together to launch an action plan for sustaining a strong community. By creating and forming this political voice, Ministry allows us to proactively lobby, partner with and educate political leaders in order to obtain the governmental assistance needed by the community. Theologians like King, Boenhoffer and Romero provide a roadmap for women congregational leaders to navigate problems in our communities.

CASE STUDY: LEARNING FROM THE BLACK BAPTIST CHURCH

> As I look about me today in this veiled world of mine, despite the noisier and more spectacular advance of my brothers, I instinctively feel and know that it is the five million women of my race who really count. Black women (and women whose grandmothers were black) are…the main pillars of those social settlements which we call churches; and they have with small doubt raised three--fourths of our church property.[94]

Nurturing women congregational leaders is a tall challenge, and it is even more difficult to end sexism in general. Learning from our past can help us, however, to refine our problem-solving strategies. As I thought about historical lessons that would inform WAM, I found the story of the Black Baptist Church's struggle with sexism to be useful because it sits at the intersections of sexism and racism.

In 1920 when W.E.B. Du Bois published his seminal book, Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil, he acknowledged and documented the significance of women in the black church, and he used this platform to give credence to the veiled feminine silhouettes who defined the success of the men in the black church, yet who had not been given the acclaim simply because they were women. Linda Faye Williams, an expert on race and gender politics, testifies that a visit to most modern-day black churches will reveal that it is a female space that is still male-dominated. [95]

Even though the Baptist churches were founded on the cornerstones of social justice and equality, they have not applied this *ethos* to garner equality for women who work tirelessly in the church, and for female clergy who acknowledge their call to preach and pastor in the kingdom of God. The church that has been a leader in the quest for

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[94] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church 1800-1920* (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1.

[95] Marcia Y. Riggs, *Plenty Good Room: Women Versus Male Power in The Black Church* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2003), 67.

racial and economic justice but has been far less able, or even willing, to maintain sexual-gender justice within its own walls.

With this unwillingness or refusal of the Baptist Church and churches in general to address this inequality from within, we continue to have a sexist schism in the church that perpetuates internal oppression. The adage which is ubiquitous in the Baptist Church, "The doors of the church are open," carries a cynical intonation on the lips of the women in its pulpit who live in a world where their God-given gifts are discounted. Even though women attend church and hold positions of leadership, the doors of the church are not truly open so long as our spiritual doors are closed. According to Bill Leonard, in his book *Baptist Ways: A History*, "theological diversity, congregational autonomy, and freedom of conscience create environments in which debate, controversy and schism are not merely possible but inevitable." [96]

Within the story of the Black Baptist Church is also the story of slavery, and how it plays a roles in shaping the expectations for Black men and women. The slave master had absolute control over the intimate lives of the slaves including the choice of a marital partner, how long couples could stay together, and forced separation of families. The exercise of this absolute control resulted in the "dismantling of black manhood and womanhood" as neither men or women were able to fulfill their gender roles in ways normative to their West African background. [97] James H. Cone provides insight on the pathology of control that is slavery's legacy:

> It is important for black men to realize that women's liberation is a viable issue. We must

[96] Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways: A History* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 2003), 9.

[97] Riggs, *Plenty Good Room: Women Versus Male Power in The Black Church*, 36.

> Recognize it and help others in the church to treat it seriously. It is not a joke. To get others to accept it as an issue that deserves serious consideration and discussion is the first step. As ministers in the church, how we treat the issue will affect the attitude of others in our pastoral care. I realize that many women will give the appearance of accepting the place set aside for them by men as is true of many blacks in relation to whites. But just as whites were responsible for creating the societal structures that aided black self-hate, so black men are responsible for creating a similar situation among black women in the church. Saying that women like their place is no different from saying that blacks like theirs.[98]

Cone's analysis helps to raise the urgency for men to see that the exclusion of women is their problem too.

Sociologist and womanist, Cheryl Towsend Gilkes offers a provocative analysis of the complexity and duplicity of the Black church with respect to matters of gender. Gilkes asserts that Black women have maintained traditions of conflict and have organized resistance to patriarchy within the black religious experience. Two examples of this are a tradition of biblical feminism and the establishment of Women's Day.[99]

Nannie Helen Burroughs was the founder and first President of Women's Day. At the age of twenty one, the Burrough's oratorical skills catapulted her out of obscurity and into the midst of the struggle of women's rights in the church. Her speech, "How the Sisters are Hindered from Helping," was a catalyst for change in the National Baptist Convention and for the formation of the Women's convention.

She assumed the presidency of the women's convention in 1948 and served until her death in 1961. Burrough's vision for Women's Day was that it would be a time for "raising women" and not simply raising money for missions.[100] The notion of Women's Day as a resistance movement is empowering. Women in 18th and 19th century Black

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[98] Riggs, *Plenty Good Room: Women versus Male power in The Black Church*, 66.

[99] Riggs, 81.

[100] Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 226-229.

Baptist and Black churches resisted their religious oppression even when they were powerless in the social sphere.

Women must reevaluate their own hermeneutics and views of women in ministry. Women themselves must decide what it means to authentically support other women in ministry with the same enthusiasm with which they support the male clergy.

In *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Delores William's critical reflection of James H. Cone's work, she asserts that:

> Anytime I have to accept a religion that won't let me fight a battle for oppressed black women, I say to hell with that religion. Inasmuch as black Christian religion-manifested in the practice and theology of the black church is often antagonistic to women's struggle for liberation, black Christian women could say, "To hell with the black church and the black expression of Christian religion in it. This could mean That the black church in America would cease to exist, since black women are its blood, bone, and sinew."[101]

Since saying "to Hell with the Black Church" would be an emotional reaction and not a viable recourse for women in ministry, then our only other alternative is to engage the church.

As I think about the specific issues of women's exclusion in the Black Baptist Church, it is clear that our alternative is to create a 21st century movement of black women united in solidarity around a common mission to *obliterate the misogyny* and the patriarchy in the black church We need a movement of women infused with the understanding that their unified weapons of mass *devotion* would become the weapons of mass *destruction* capable of eliminating the unethical practices of sexism.

The Black church must be compelled to change their theology of the gate not by hope and wishful thinking, but by the intentionality and tenacity of female unity—women

[101] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1986), *1*90.

refusing to abandon the struggle for equality until the doors of the church are open to all women.

Like Delores Williams, I believe in a religion that believes in freedom. Without freedom and equality, God's kingdom has not come and God's will is not done. Walter Rauschenbusch stated that the "Kingdom of God is humanity organized according to the will of God. And when this happens, it brings society in conformity to the ethics of Jesus. Disparate treatment is against the ethics of Jesus."[102]

Sexism, misogyny and patriarchy dehumanizes and destroys women. Christian women must continue to make demands for visibility, inclusion and equality.[103] Most of all, black christian women must unite and confront their veneration of the black male preacher over their capable sister. Sojourner Truth, a trailblazer in the anti-slavery movement and the struggle for equal rights for women, echoed this sentiment in her address to the Ohio Women's Rights Convention on May 29th, 1851 when she stated:

> That little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, because Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him….If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, These women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again![104]

From my own personal experience, I proclaim that the same God who called me to preach, teach and lead is the same God who made me a woman. And, I am convinced that God was not confused on either count.[105]

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[102] Leonard, *Baptist Way*, 218.

[103] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 192.

[104] Wade Hudson, Powerful Words: More than 200 years of Extraordinary writing By African Americans (USA: Scholastic 2004), 25.

[105] Riggs, *Plenty Good Room: Women versus Male power in The Black Church*, 83.

Sexism is a problem for our entire society, and by extension for all churches and faiths, not just the Black Baptist Chuch. The challenge of exclusion is a *human challenge*, not just a race or gender issue. If not resolved, it will hinder our ability to unify in fellowship as a human family.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKS: ONE RABBI'S TESTIMONY

In addition to looking to history for examples of women's push for congregational leadership, I turned to modern day examples as well, such as the Women's Rabbinic Network (WRN).[106] WRN has played a strategic role in the lives of 575 women Rabbis and graduates that are ordained in leadership roles, with more than half of those women Rabbis looking to WRN for some amount of support. Senior Rabbi Amy Swartzman at the Temple Rodef Shalom, said that she "would not have taken on such a leadership role twenty years ago, without the mentoring she received from the male Rabbi in her synagogue as well as the support of WRN."[107]

WRN shows that we need a solution that connects women not only to each other, but also to men. The solution involves eradicating exclusion in all our laws and systems, and it involves shaping a new model to encourage collaboration and partnership between men and women to create a pipeline for social change and joint leadership. This pipeline could result in a new generation of inclusive transformational leaders that are working for gender equality and social justice. In turn, this increased participation will result in a greater number of investments made towards strengthening our society and the organizations which will then have a greater impact on this social justice issue on an increasing larger scale.

I found Rabbi Schwartzman's personal testimony to be inspirational, and full of lessons and good ideas to take into WAM. She said that

> Becoming a Rabbi 20 years ago was a huge undertaking especially for one of the biggest reformed synagogues in Virginia. It would not have been achievable if not for the

[106] Women's Rabbinic Network, http://womensrabbinicnetwork.org (accessed September 2010)

[107] Senior Rabbi Amy Swartzman, in conversation with author, September 2010.

> WRN's support and the sponsorship and the mentorship of male Rabbis…In the Reform denomination, leaders are under pressure to ensure balance is accurate of male/female leadership.

Her story illustrates that change will not come fast and she noted that it was a "40-years long discussion" and that she is "amazed that this issue still lingers."

Rabbi Schwartzman discussed how some women, during the candidate search to fill a clergy position, still face questions about whether or not they will use maternity leave. Furthermore, "Rabbinic compensation is still a challenge for women."[108]

She also talked about her vision for congregational leadership:

> I would envision as a purpose for ordained ministry, not to be mired in administrative minutia, but to have time to grow spiritually; A well run synagogue is attained at the expense of personal and spiritual growth. We need to rise above the details instead of leading yet another service. Another challenge is real personal depth…in relationships. There is very little time to invest in the people. While a big congregation has these challenges a smaller congregation may be even more challenging because there are less people to do the work. I would absolutely welcome a new paradigm of support systems for women engaged in Ministry.[109]

I hope that WAM will be part of the new paradigm that catapults women to their rightful place in leadership.

[108] Senior Rabbi Amy Swartzman, in conversation with author, September 2010.

[109] Ibid.

MASTERING THE ART OF PASTORAL CARE

As WAM embarks upon its mission to inspire women's leadership, it will engage in explicit dialogue about pastoral care and the mandate we are given as congregational leaders. In pastoral ministry, we should look at ourselves as agents of God to carry out God's will, and to be proactive in making the world a better place. Our spirituality and pastoral practice should not be dependent on God's actions. Through our own faith and relationship with God, our spirituality should enable us to drive change in our community by inviting God in our circumstance and daily duty. Additionally, our communities are composed of various groups of people with different cultural background and histories; so we must avoid a purist approach to culture if we are to be good pastors.

In pastoral ministry, we rely on the ability to meet people where they are, even if we have never personally been in their circumstances. The ability for immediate reflection and interpretation of a situation is significant as well, and assists with creating meaningful dialogue and new understandings for all involved. I believe that ministerial transformation also requires the ability to discern God's voice in dialogue with the community, and to inspire others to participate in a cause that transcends egotistical behavior and exclusion.

Our postmodern society and culture tends to usher us away from the traditional--churches, religion and God. The distractions of technology, scientific advancement, and wealth, block our spirituality. We become an arrogant community that feels more in control of its own destiny, and we take God's role for granted. The church has played a role in losing credibility with the modern world. By allowing corruption, abuse of children, and adultery to occur under their watch, religious institutions play a part in

losing people, and even pushing away those who truly want God in their life. This movement away from the source creates a spiritual gap in the hearts of women and men.

Some people think of spirituality as the church, and when the church lets them down, they shut down their quest for God. This is the same process that occurs when women feel that God has let them down and allowed them to suffer- the result is that they become angry with God. Therefore, it is critical that individually and as pastors, that we reflect Christ in our behavior. This means taking the unpopular route when necessary, and challenging religious entities when abuse of power, exploitation, exclusion and manipulation of their followers are evident. As pastors, we can also empower religious entities to be a voice for the voiceless, as opposed to being catalysts supporting oppressive governments.

Love for the community should be at the heart of women's pastoral care. WAM will help women to speak up and demand what the community needs. We must learn to delight in our identity as children of God and to use that strength to be a catalyst for change globally.

We cannot do ministry and pastoral care without the church. The church is the school, the practice, the process, the guide and the enforcer, so that in unity with others, our faith is embedded in a strong foundation. The church can help us find our own spiritual voice so that we may achieve our potential.

Yet how can we as women work within churches that are silent to the abuse of women, even at the church's expense? Issues like domestic violence were even silenced in scripture. In the story of Tamar who faced abuse (Genesis 38:10-25,) we only hear the perspective of the men involved but not that of Tamar herself. The writer of the Text is

culpable in contributing to the silence around women's experiences in life and in church. God created both male and female equally,[110] therefore we will not be complete until there is parity and men and women are serving God together. Only in our togetherness do we resemble God.

Pastoral care is not an easy ministry, and requires much more training than other forms of ministry. Pastors have to be able to understand people's motivations from all perspectives: emotional, psychological, spiritual and financial. It is an unpredictable business, but women bring countless God-given talents, and we need to better prepare women to take on this charge. Men also have to step up to the plate, as John Piper asserts:

> If I were to put my finger on one devastating sin today, it would not be the so-called women's movement, but the lack of spiritual leadership by men at home and in the church…The spiritual aimlessness and weakness and lethargy and loss of nerve among men are the major issues, not the upsurge of interest in women's ministries. Likewise, we believe that the problems the church is experiencing today through the influence of feminist ideology is primarily a result of men failing to assume responsibility for leadership and carrying out that responsibility through selfless servant hood of Christ's church. May the Lord grant that all of us-men and women-would be faithful in our calling to serve him and to serve one another in love.[111]

There is so much work to be done in the world that God needs both men and women called to pastoral ministry. Through WAM and my ministry, I hope to enhance women's preparation, talent and drive to lead. Women are prepared to share in the work for the greater good of God's kingdom.

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[110] Genesis 5:2-3: Male and female He created them, and He blessed them and named them "Humankind" when they were created.

[111] John Piper. *What's the Difference? Manhood and Womanhood Defined according to the Bible* (Westbrook, Illinois: Crossway Book, 1990), 49.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

> And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; For You, O Lord, has not forsaken those who see You (Psalm 9:10).

After considering the exclusion of women from many angles, I added to my research by gathering first-hand testimonies of women congregational leaders through a survey and focus groups. Together, this informs the comprehensive intervention strategy that I call Women's Anointed Mission (WAM).

As a female minister, I found that much of what was shared by my peers resonated with my own perspective. Hearing each other's stories will be a key element of WAM because through this type of sharing we learn to have empathy for one another and to recognize our common ground, as opposed to our differences. Sharing our story helps us to be grounded in our identity, so that we have agency and do not show up as "victims." We need to teach each other how to reclaim our power when we feel powerless. By being our authentic self in testimony, we give permission for others to do the same.

The importance of partnership was a common thread throughout our stories. God instructed Moses to use the elders who would listen and to use his brother, Aaron, to be his voice if he was insecure about his own. Prior to launching WAM, I will identify both individual elders and institutional partners who can contribute to the investment in women's leadership.

Diversity also is an important factor. Although some people think that they lose their own culture and identity when they join groups with different communities, we cannot afford to be stuck on the battlefield of a black-white racial dichotomy. For example, black people need to hear the stories of other persons of color, and immigrants'

stories, to even understand their own better. We need to create the circle of dialogue in WAM with a multicultural crowd so that we may have real growth in our relationships.

Self-healing is a vital step for women considering leadership. We need to heal ourselves before trying to help others in our community. Whether we as women are operating from a calling from God, or simply from our heart, underneath our genuine urge to foster change, to heal and contribute to our society, lurks the demons from our own childhood. Many women wrestle with the fear of abandonment; some consequently choose to go into survival mode, depending on male attention and turning against our sisters. This creates a false sense of security that is fleeting, and that leaves women feeling empty and alone. Congregational leaders who operate in this mode can subject their community to unethical behaviors, thus losing the trust and confidence that the community normally has in its spiritual leaders. Given that we are driven by these inner struggles, our character and judgment must be in check before taking on a role as clergy and before entering other leadership roles in our community.

While sexism seems entrenched and the problem can feel oppressive, my vision as a spiritual leader is to use God as my weapon, instead of using my fist. God found me and knows my potential and I lean on God's ability to work through me. My goal for ministry is to first be aware of what is going on in our global communities, then to ask questions and investigate and subsequently, get involved. My calling to ministry and the opportunity that I have with WAM, is my chance to play a part in changing oppressive activities and belief in our communities.

God has given me many gifts. I need to use all of my talents to do God's will, or else I am doing an injustice to my community. My ministry will focus on the questions

that continue to divide us. Even in environments where diversity causes little conflicts—there are churches where congregations welcome everyone regardless of their gender or race—the problems persist outside the walls of the church and permeate the entire community. For this reason, congregations cannot be too inward-focused at risk of losing relevance to the people they hope to engage.

By renewing the church's "mind" along with our human mind, we can begin the process of reconciliation with God. Our mind can be our worst enemy. The mind can keep us chained to the past and to a negative worldview. We must address our broken spirits otherwise it can cost our anointing, our relationship with God, our health, and even our very life. Negativity is like a demon, who starts by taking up just a bit of space in our minds and hearts, but eventually overwhelms us with a cesspool of bad energy. This is why we must be transformed. Any woman who wants to heal her broken spirit must attempt to shift her mindset.

We must break down the old way of thinking, and rebuild a new way to live our lives and empower ourselves as leaders. All change involves loss, but everything we lose makes room for growth and transformation. It creates space for new divine partnerships that are critical to our destiny. There will be all manners of change to face in our lifetimes: changes that will redirect, rejuvenate, relocate, or reposition us. We will also face changes that will stun, shake, and break us; changes that will stop us in our tracks, as well as changes that will liberate us. Regardless, we must be willing to pay the price of change, and WAM will be the support network that helps women of faith through that process in a safe environment.

WAM will welcome women of faith with open arms. It will not matter who the person is or how deep she is spiritually. Everyone has "head trips" in life, experiences that throw us off track. But it is only when we are willing to be transformed, when we are willing to be brutally honest with the person looking back at us in the mirror, that we will be able to experience the breakthroughs we are longing for in our lives.

The research for WAM was broad and vast. I wanted to utilize all that is available in order to hear many different voices as it concerns women exclusion in societies leadership roles. I read the WSJ weekly for data on this topic which brought the voices of men and women executives challenge, frustrations on this topic as well as consultants new approaches to create change and help corporate firms be more inclusive.

I focused on how the U.S. government specifically and especially this pro-women administration are gathering data to highlight the need and to show specific policies that are being implemented due to the alarming data to prepare women for more jobs, government assistance, protection from domestic violence, and opportunities as entrepreneurs and small business owners.

I reviewed many surveys available online, and conducted my own targeted surveys at three focus group events which brought over sixty ministers perspectives. I also conducted interviews across faith to hear if the exclusion is still a norm or is there a progressive effort to create transformation.

I read opinions of over 100 theologians and advocates on this topic and used eloquent language and quotes from well known thought leaders in the literary industry, corporate and religious sector to highlight the perspectives learned over time as this phenomenon continues to challenge our community worldwide.

I listened to women networks blogs and YouTube commentaries and inspirational speakers to promote change and to discuss ways to deal with the symptoms to women and society because of the lack of women in leadership.

FIELD WORK

My field work to explore what women leaders are experiencing today spanned denominations and religious traditions. The overwhelming response was the request from women of faith to have more dialogue and opportunities to network with each other; and they affirmed the need for WAM. Women are hurting more than ever as they try to liberate themselves from tyranny and injustice, are ready to lead and are prepared to add their God-given voices to the world.

In order to reach women of faith, I used multiple vehicles to connect with women leaders and to hear their challenges, including:

- Focus groups of women in ministry where the women dialogued and offered their opinions on the problem;
- Forums co-branded with NYTS Women Leadership initiatives to address the needs of women in their seminary experience;
- Meetings with different faith leaders; and
- Surveys and phone interviews to assess the demand for WAM and investing in women's ability to serve as congregational leaders.

In response to the focus groups that I held, women who participated reinforced that need for creating more opportunities for spaces that bring together women of faith. Some of their feedback on the group included:

- It added a supportive thread that brings us together in a relationship that can cure the lack of sisterhood [and] support.
- There is grave need for fellowship, storytelling and networking for women in ministry.

- The workshop was excellent because it gave me the opportunity to share my story. It also allowed me to receive messages from sisters that will help in my spiritual journey.

The feedback from the women reaffirmed my calling from God, that asks me to serve not only as an ordained minister, but also as the visionary to ensure that WAM exists as part of the solution.

OBSERVATION OF ISSUES FACING WOMEN

DO YOU AGREE?

Women need to define their own leadership style

Women need to tell or write their story

Women need to be less competitive with one another and work together

Come petite----make the women smaller though she has contributed greatly but you make her gifts smaller so you can feel greater than her.

Women need to learn that competition does not mean 'eliminate' the opponent

Women need to learn the three P's = Pray - Prepare - Proceed

Women need to get help from a network that understands their journey

Women need to learn that to be a good leader, one has to be a good follower

Women need to admit when we are not ready

Women need to enforce in society that 'nature makes no mistakes'

Women need to be awake and serious about their own transformation

Women need to use technology as a tool to spread inclusion as a social change

Women need to empower the youth and next generation of women to action

Women need to have courage to accept uncertainty

Women need to be able to stand in their own personal power

Women need to be present with where we are today

Women need to hold society accountable including themselves for their well being

Women not only need a movement but one that is institutionalized and endures

Women need to give up guilt and condemnation of themselves

Women need to be empowered

Women need to breathe in and exhale

KEY LEARNING FROM SHADOWING

WAM will lift up the best practices from both men and women who are congregational leaders. To get a deeper understanding of what is needed for modern-day congregations, I spent time shadowing various leaders to see their work in practice.

It was an enriching experience to meet and shadow these leaders. These are some of what was learned that I added to my personal toolkit that I will take to WAM:

- A Pastor of a United Church of Christ taught me how to keep traditional Christian values and practices, such as Maundy Thursday and Ash Wednesday; he showed me how tradition weaves together our individual testimonies and how it can provide valuable time for sharing.
- An Assistant Pastor of a United Church of Christ, models how to share talents—like using intuition, practicality, and being on point and using fluidity as a means to getting to know herself and her congregation better.
- A Rabbi from a Reform Synagogue guided me to understand that multiculturalism is possible, even in the most conservative environments, without creating friction between the congregation members and the visiting guests from different backgrounds.
- Rabbi and Member of the Women's Rabbinic Network and Rabbi of one of the largest Temples in Virginia also inspired me to lift up the existing examples of women congregational leaders so that we can learn from their testimonies.

WAM SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUPS

Some of the responses from my focus group of over 25 women are reflected on the following two pages. The good news is that currently, the women feel that support for their leadership does exist. However, they point to the need for more adequate and holistic support. These women are excited to use their talents for ordained ministry. One respondent in particular articulated the need for a support network in light of the cultural and institutional discrimination that women still face.

The next two pages include the survey along with some of the responses collected.

1. In your spiritual journey towards leadership in ministry, do you believe that you have had that you have had support? Yes/No
   - **All replied yes**.

2. If yes, what was the form of support you received that was most helpful?
   - **Senior Pastor from Church on the Edge created space for ministry**
   - **Prayer, guidance, understanding networking**
   - **Encouragement**
   - **From women in ministry**
   - **NYTS by helping getting to know oneself/voice.**

3. Who provided the support you received on your journey?
   - **Senior Pastor from Church on the Edge**
   - **Family, pastors women, theologians**
   - **Friends**
   - **Church & Family**

4. Have you had support from family or church?
   - **Yes, both**
   - **Yes, family**
   - **Yes.**

5. Have you partnered with your inner genius / Holy Spirit?
   - **Yes**
   - **Yes, there is a power and direction …**
   - **Yes, the Holy Spirit**

6. The support you received, was it adequate? Was it emotional, financial or spiritual?
   - **Adequate – Spiritual**
   - **Not adequate**
   - **All**
   - **Emotional and Spiritual in a sense that is what backs us to continue and financial too in ….**

7. What is your vision of leadership in the ministry setting?
    - **Tapping into my unique gifts and talents while being led by the Spirit**
    - **As presence in the community, network. Leadership makes the network, relationship, mutual support possible.**
    - **Seeking**
    - **Helping people to break…**
    - **Very Excellent**

8. What are the incremental steps that you can take to get the breakthroughs that you imagine?
    - **Prayer, Faith beyond my understanding submission and surrender**
    - **Be aware of who we are, our call, get to know other ministers and be open to learning**
    - **Open the door to everyone**
    - **Raise my --- voice**
    - **Let the Community Churches hear my voice**

9. What would you envision as a purpose for ordained ministry?
    - **Very good**
    - **Been ordained already**
    - **Try not to discriminate against no one**
    - **Support the church learning how to be and being a presence of love, justice and hope in the community and world**
    - **As a sign of formal confirmation of Gods will**

10. Would you welcome a new paradigm of support systems for women engaged in Ministry?
    - **Yes**
    - **Very interesting as women needs support to overcome institutional, discrimination and cultural**

CHAPTER V

WOMEN'S ANOINTED MISSION (WAM)

I have seen first-hand the positive results of empowering people to their full potential. I have seen in the corporate sector that when men and women combine their leadership abilities with parity, the company as a whole tends to do better and have a healthier culture. We stand only to gain if we combine our talents as we attempt to do God's will in ministry in the world, the church, and the community.

One of my assumptions at the start of this project was that for women's voices to emerge in contemporary leadership across faiths, we would need a grassroots effort to attack the problem at its source, and to visualize a different outcome as a community that utilizes all of the gifts and talents bestowed upon each one of us by God. In partnership with God and each other, we would need to use our unique gifts to better ourselves spiritually and the world at large. After all, God has used many courageous women in Biblical times, and "We must see ourselves in God's eyes. God's opinion is the only one we can really trust, because God is the one who created us."[112]

I listened to the insights and recommendations of today's women in ministry. They shared with me some of the tensions that they feel in the work, such as: church history versus contemporary world views; women's biological clock and the impact on

[112] Cynthia L. Hale, *I'm a Piece of Work! Sisters Shaped by God* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 2010), 9.

her career decisions; the perceived inferiority of women; cultural differences; and women's inner psychology and disposition.

Women's Anointed Mission (WAM) cannot realistically solve all the disparities and inequalities that exist for women. WAM can be one part of the fabric of our society that is a positive influence, and a strategic effort to support women's congregational leadership. The challenge is complex, is a psychological spider web, and it needs to be detangled using storytelling and dialogue. WAM will also attempt to unravel the systemic policies that keep women from stepping up. I am aware that change may not come immediately, especially considering how corporate America is fairing after many attempts:

> Only 11 chief executives of Fortune 500 companies are women, down from a peak of 15 in 2010 according to a spokesman for Catalyst Inc., a nonprofit women's research group. There were two Fortune 500 female CEOs in 2000, up from one in 1995, Catalyst said in a 2000 report. To crack the upper echelons of corporate America, McKinsey said companies must groom a deeper bench of female middle managers for advancement.[113]

WAM will hold women accountable to take agency in their own transformation. It will give women a foundation to overcome their obstacles and to experience a rebirth into their divine purpose.

My fieldwork and conversations with women proved a mandate for WAM. Below is a summary of women's voices and responses:

What are some of the ways we hold ourselves back?

- We need outside approval.
- We try to please everyone.
- We are not sure which goal to follow.

[113] Joann S. Lublin, "Coaching Urged for Women, Inadequate Career Development Holds Back Female Executives." *The Wall Street Journal*, 04 April 4 2011, Managing & Careers section.

- We feel better backing or coaching a leader, than being the one in the front.
- We lack courage; and as we undermine our own lives we become enraged at ourselves.
- We have a pity party shared with a heavy dose of loneliness.
- We lack in ourselves and others

What happens when we hold ourselves back?

- We become burned out.
- We can see decisions that need to be made, but we postpone them
- Lack of self care
- Stressed, tired
- Goals, passion, purpose, integrity and principles, commitment to ourselves, family

What do we want as leaders and women?

- We want to stay focused and to be held accountable for our actions.
- We want to deal with judgment, ego and the alter-ego as well.
- We want to give up the need to have someone take care of us

What are the challenges we face in leadership?

- We struggle to find our voice.
- It is hard to identify and to be clear about our authentic selves.
- Sometimes we end up being someone else's shadow.
- Focusing on the past can be limiting at times.
- We are sometimes too timid and apologetic.

What are the negative thoughts that we internalize as women and as human beings?

- I do not belong.
- I should not even be alive.
- God made a mistake.
- Who am I to deserve anything?
- I cannot win.
- I will never get what I want.
- I will always be isolated.
- I will never succeed.
- My past will win, I will lose.

What is our vision for a network that supports women leaders?

- We want parity for women in leadership roles.
- We want to set high objectives and maintain a high standard of performance.
- We want to use teamwork to maximize mission and vision.
- We want to identify talents in all of our stakeholders, and enlist them in our efforts.
- We want to build trust—it is critical.

WAM will ignite conversation to promote inclusiveness and start from this place of women's brutal honesty, their pain and their desires. It will weave in theoretical approaches to leadership and spirituality, professional skill building and leadership development, educational programming on social issues, and directed guidance to gain a deeper understand of religion and God. Through this comprehensive and strategic

approach, WAM will contribute towards celebrating God's grace through elevating women in congregational leadership.

TRANSFORMING WOMEN'S MINISTRY

> The world needs women's leadership, our playing small does not serve the world.
> ~ Maya Angelou

Women and men both travel spiritual journeys and are called to serve God in ministry. My vision for WAM is to have a space where women can reflect on their ministry. The beauty of ministry is its ability to connect individuals, religious leaders, with communities. Women who step up into congregational leadership will also take risks in the name of justice, equality and fairness. They will challenge lingering sexist perceptions of women; and they will transform the world so that it is more inclusive for the generations to come. This is one of the most important goals of ministry in modern society.

John Patton, in *From Ministry to Theology*, tells us that good pastoral care is about putting the community before the self; it is about leading, sacrificing, experiencing and taking action for the benefit of the larger community. However, ministry is very complex as it brings the whole person along with their unique personalities, traditions, and life experiences. The concept of "communitas" provides a framework for understanding the complexity. Patton talks about "communitas" as "having an existential quality involving the whole person in relation to other persons." Jesus taught us to trust and to acknowledge our own voice within, and for women, this means bringing all of their unique qualities to the ministry.

It is also useful to look at how Jesus and his disciples ministered to their flock. They preached to people, they ministered to those in need, and they willingly faced danger when there was greater meaning for the actions they were taking. Jesus, and each of his disciples, demonstrated "the capacity for encouraging change, for risking oneself in

decisions about what needs to be done, and for making use of practical and ritual knowledge that goes beyond words."[114]

Women and men on their own can self-doubt, but with the will of God as part of our purpose, we have hope and the will to act. Once the disciples found the strength in Jesus and each other, they were more able to go out and spread the Word and perform at their full potential and build a community of believers even after Jesus died. Although at times they fell short and doubted their faith, they became a team with Jesus to bring people to God. This hope is what we share with the community in our ministry. We give people another reason to be the best they can be in the world.

Women need to compare Jesus' mandate to our own calling from God. He was called to be an example to human beings,, to teach others about God, and explain our own role in his Father's kingdom. Jesus followed God's demands faithfully, even when he faced physical harm. He took up his role as healer and teacher with focus and steadfast determination, and he stayed true to the mission and vision of his calling without being distracted by matters and ideals of the physical world. Jesus experienced the community through His disciples. He brought a variety of people together and had them focus on a greater and common goal of keeping faith and loving God and each other.

Jesus as Lord and Teacher taught us that God dwells within. When we learn to listen and interpret what our heart is guiding us to do, we are listening to God and experiencing the community through that lens. Understanding ourselves as ministers and our calling enables us to understand our communities.

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[114] John Patton, *From Ministry to Theology: Pastoral Action & Reflection* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1990), 77.

Many women compete, neglect each other's cry for help, and we dominate, manipulate, and are corrupted. This means our world is more difficult, our children are not protected, our elderly are neglected, our women are abused and left out, and our men are lost in unnecessary wars. The urgent need for more inclusive communities is growing. It is critical that we find a common ground through ministry where we all meet for the betterment of all.

Women ministers must tackle 21st century challenges that affect their community on the personal and psychological level, such as the unceasing need for approval:

> The 21st century behaviors that no longer help us are: loss of self-confidence; low self esteem; and fear of being rejected… These behaviors will get in the way of declaring our place in the world and asserting our own voice. It will get in our way and in the way of our desired results…From eight weeks to birth; the child looks to the facial expression and makes eye contact. In that reading of facial queues from their mothers, if they view depression, sadness or disappointment, it gets transferred to the child. This transference becomes 'they are not good enough' and therefore the child spends a lifetime looking for approval.[115]

Going through life looking for approval from everyone you interact with is an exhausting process. "We cannot go into the battlefield of today in these modern and challenging times with the premises of apologizing to the world for being present; we are women and the world needs us now."[116]

Discerning one's purpose is difficult not just when self-doubt and a need for acceptance are present, but it is also challenging because we live in a chaotic world. We get pulled in so many different directions and we assign ourselves to so many tasks that we may bump into our purpose and not even know it. We cannot block ourselves from

[115] Ellie Drake, "The 4-Step Life Enhancing Formula for 'Women'!" Online seminar, BraveHeart Women, September 15th @ 2:30 pm EST, http://www.braveheartwomen.com.

[116] Ibid.

knowing and fulfilling our purpose because we end up exhausted when we are doing what we are not meant to be doing.

Women tend to be perfectionists, which does not help us with reaching our purpose. We not only expect ourselves to do the impossible just to feel worthy, but we also expect others to be at that same standard. This behavior maybe a symptom of our upbringing, but we need to not burn our candle on both ends, run out of steam before the task at hand is done.

I have empathy for women's struggles as ministers because I have found that the biggest challenge as a minister that I did not expect is how much what happened in childhood still impacts who I am today. It has taken incredible amount of self-work to undo what I heard, what happened to me, and my interpretation of it all—especially the painful memories that relate to treatment I received as a woman. The journey for me is to stand in the present fully aware of the past and its presence in me, while remaining removed enough from the past so that can speak with a strong confident voice reflective of the woman I am today.

For these many reasons, WAM will work with the whole individual, helping women ministers to gain confidence and insights that will help them to counsel the community. WAM women will be able to model Jesus and others who answered God's call.

We need capable women ministers today, especially when the communities that they seek to serve sometimes reject them. Ideas about women ministers today are complex, but they still show room for growth, as is evident in the results from a 2006 study done with a group of fifty teenagers:

Perspectives in support of women preachers:

- Women are equal to men
- They are called in the Word of God just like men
- They are called to preach, teach, and do whatever God says
- Women have a different point of view that is just as important as men
- Mary Magdalene was the one who told the men about Jesus' resurrection
- Where do you come from?
- The woman is the giver of life and sometimes says things better than men
- Women are more sensitive and can reach more sensitive spots in people
- We need to see past all that strength stuff
- God is the one who calls people to preach
- There are more men on television with flashy reputations and stuff
- Women can help more people

Perspectives against women preachers:

- In the Bible, I think in Deuteronomy, it says that women must bow down to men
- 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 states man is not from woman but woman from man
- Woman was created to cater to all of man's needs
- Men are the most powerful and prudent
- Men should not listen to women
- 2Timothy 2:12 says women are not to preach or have authority but to be silent
- All the prophets were males
- In historical days men were pastors and preachers

- The father is supposed to be the head of the household
- Men do all the work anyway so they are also supposed to run the church[117]

Women must face these perceptions head on, just as Jesus was willing to face harm so that he could help the community.

WAM is the result of my own journey of achieving great success at a top Wall Street firm despite facing negative stereotypes, and it is the result of attaining the ability to fully surrender to the light within. I chose to pursue a Doctorate of Ministry to academically prepare for my calling, and I put my vision for ministry into practice at a United Church of Christ. I had to figure out my own path as a woman minister, but WAM will provide a structured environment that can help make this easier for others.

The women's network that I launched during my corporate career was successful but it was missing other parts that would address the whole of the leader. We were missing conversation on healing wounds, hearing the voice within, and on how to find guidance through spirituality. I see WAM as another opportunity to launch a more holistic platform for women's leadership. Supporting women minister through WAM will help us to grow as a community of faith, and to have faith in each other, which is fostered by our love of the Creator.

[117] Brown, *Can a Sistah Get a Little Help?*, 3.

THE VISION BEHIND WAM

In Chapter II, I deconstructed women's exclusion through a proposed set of dialogues. Women's Anointed Mission (WAM) will be a structured program that will expand upon these dialogues, and augment the activities with skill-building and support.

Through my own life experience of accepting my calling as a women minister, I have identified a number of factors and mindsets that lead to success. Some of these are:

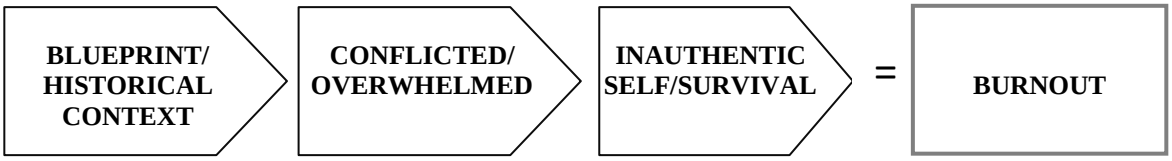
- Do not rely on form without respecting function.
- In striving for perfection, one must remember that we are flawed human beings
- Concentrate on your strengths, but be aware of your weaknesses
- Utilize your strengths to address your weaknesses
- Exercise self control and always operate from the center of love so that you can extend grace to someone else
- Always allow the Holy Spirit to do the work (instead of acting independently)
- Identify the ways we sabotage ourselves as women.
- Learn from the struggle of women in Scripture.
- Do not settle for a lesser position under the guise of humility, when you are skilled and trained for leadership roles.

Finally, we must engage in difficult conversations and be willing to hold unpopular positions at times in order to do what is right.

One difficult charge that we as leaders face is to take into account and to give validity to historical context. I have learned that while these discussions, especially in diverse groups, can bring conflict and be overwhelming, they can also be positive and

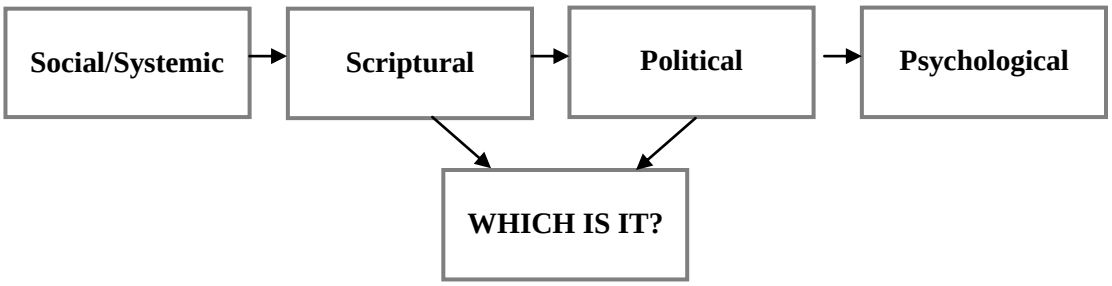
harmonious. WAM will take the positive approach to history and critical interpretation, and will treat diversity as an asset.

Often when we are in a culture where we cannot solve conflicts, we adopt an inauthentic approach to life as we try to cope with the feelings. As Dr. Howard Thurman pointed out: "If you cannot hear the sound of the genuine in yourself, you will all of your life spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls." [118] Therefore, being inauthentic robs us of discovering who we really are. We are at the mercy of the world, distant from God, and we live by an external definition of ourselves instead of living by our own definition. We have learned to overcome and survive while forgetting to seek out a union guided by the Holy Spirit for our mutual greater good.



The graphic above illustrates how these factors are connected, and how if we are not careful, this situation can result in burnout for women. WAM will operate free of the notions of self-blame and victimization. WAM will create an environment based on collaboration. This type of space is needed for women and men to partner and to achieve greater good together in society. My passion to launch WAM comes from a desire to have a program for women to deconstruct the patterns and negative behaviors that have prevented the breakthrough we need to eradicate exclusion. There are many aspects that could use deconstruction:

[118] Howard Thurman, "Daily Celebrations," www.dailycelebrations.com (accessed June 2011).



WAM's integrative approach will take on all of these issues. It is challenging to decipher the landscape of social issues that compete and intersect; however, we cannot be complacent. We must be prepared to uproot and to take the risks of leaving our comfort zones which may be our churches, places of ministry, or our work environments in order to go to a place where there is an opening for transformative leadership.

During my seminary experience, I was blessed with the support and partnership from women who embodied the character, insight, foresight and spirit, which shaped me and which I hold up as a model. This also solidified my commitment to make WAM a pillar of strength for women in ministry. WAM will show women in ministry that

> A new life awaits women. Within them is the initiative to take the leap of faith into that new life. We must unlock the treasure of potential, purpose, and power that resides within women. Deposited in them before time ever began, that treasure will enable them to risk nothing by risking everything for the future God has promised them all![119]

WAM will also follow the principle of the Hindu goddesses in order to provide "the psychological well-being that positive female imagery brings. It is not to provide equal rights or high status, but to provide psychological comfort."[120]

WAM aims to meet women where they are and to address their individual needs by removing obstacles to personal growth. One-on-one mentoring will be used to assist

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[119] Dr. Patricia Bailey-Jones, *Women Risktakers: It's Your Destiny-Reach Higher, Stand Stronger, Go Further* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Harrison House, Inc., 2004), x.

[120] Alf Hiltebeitel and Kathleen M. Erndl, *Is The Goddess a Feminist?: The Politics of South Asian Goddesses* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 106.

the women as they face the pain in their lives. WAM's intention is to see that all women called by God realize their destiny and accomplish all of their spiritual goals.

My hope is that we become "kept women," as Cynthia Hale describes in *I'm a Piece of Work*:

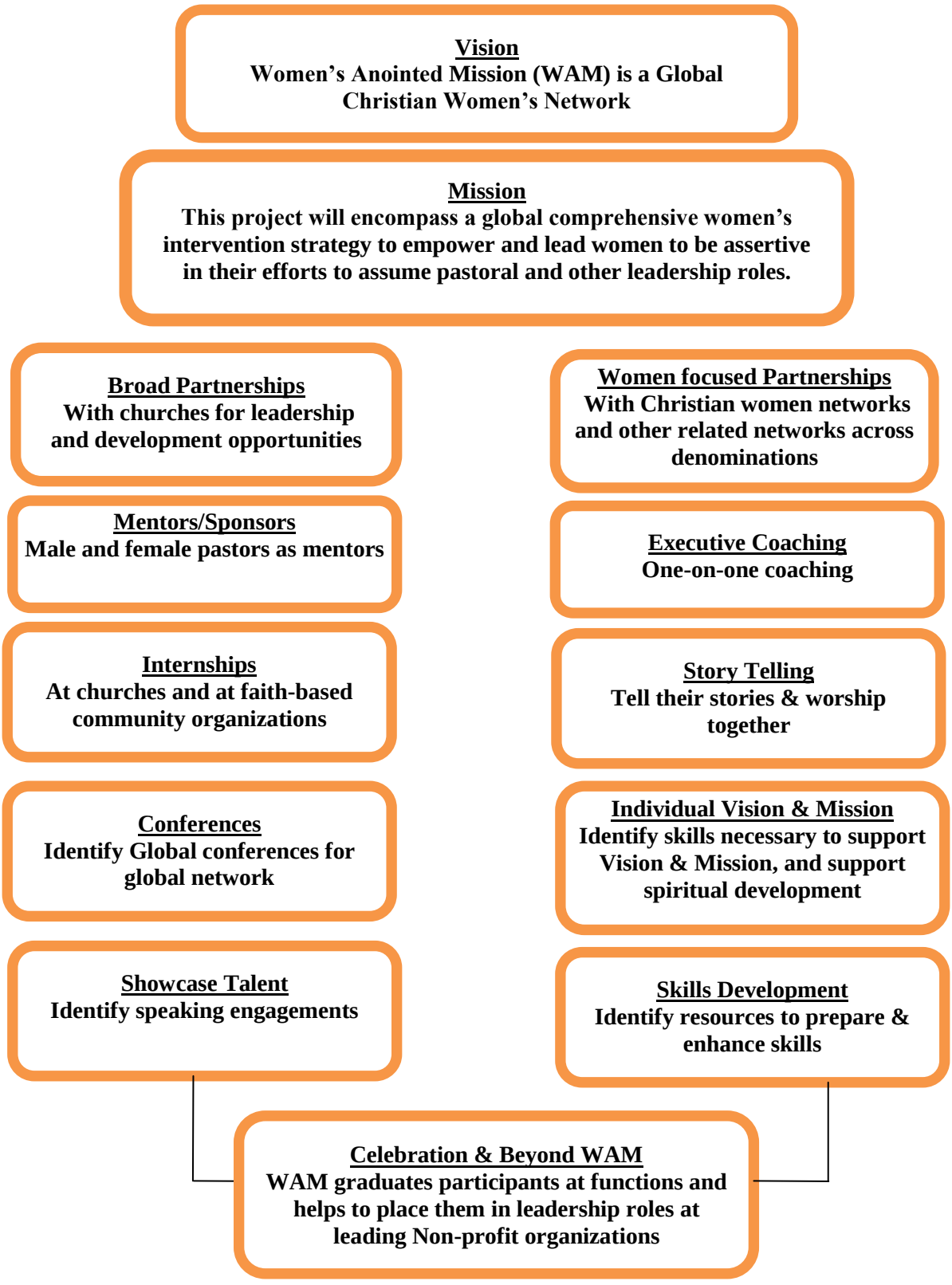
> We are kept women. We are not being kept by someone else's husband which is what a "kept woman" usually means in our society but "kept by God" because he knows us, understands us, walks with us daily in our journey and prepares for us a destiny revealing God's grace and mercy on earth.[121]

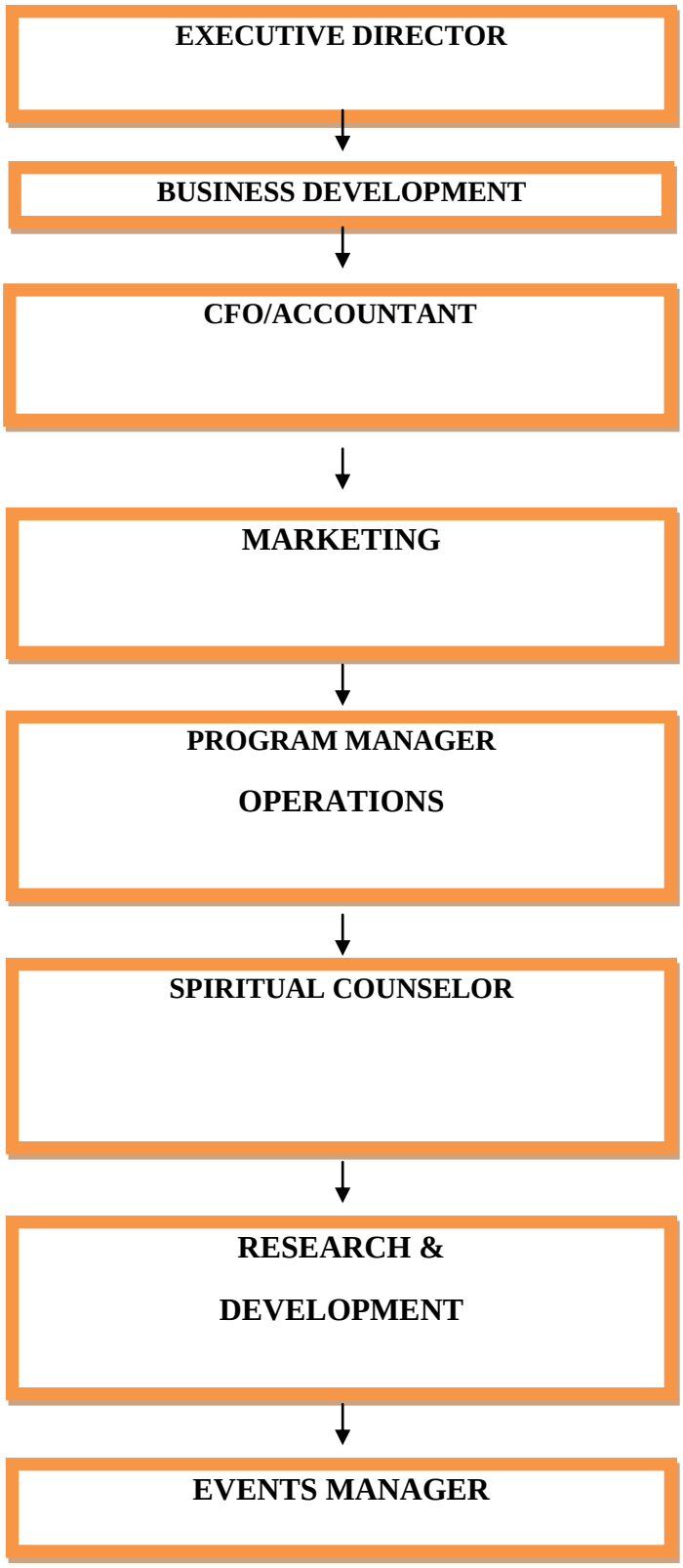
WAM will guide women in ministry to develop their theology in support of the ministry that they are passionate about. This will strengthen their hermeneutical and teaching skills, and their delivery of God's Word. Romans 12:2 says that we should "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what the will of God is." WAM will facilitate marginal exercise to strengthen grounding so that women in ministry can ground their theology and ministry on God and no one else. Through WAM, I would like to create an army of empowered women who take what they learn into the community to help others reconcile with the Creator.

[121] Hale, *I'm a Piece of Work!*, 26.

WAM'S STRUCTURE

On the following pages I am including a chart that visually displays the vision and strategies for WAM; on the subsequent page, there is a proposed organizational chart. Combining all of these elements will help to ensure that WAM is successful and impactful.


Vision
Women's Anointed Mission (WAM) is a Global Christian Women's Network
Mission
This project will encompass a global comprehensive women's intervention strategy to empower and lead women to be assertive in their efforts to assume pastoral and other leadership roles.
Broad Partnerships
With churches for leadership and development opportunities
Women focused Partnerships
With Christian women networks and other related networks across denominations
Mentors/Sponsors
Male and female pastors as mentors
Executive Coaching
One-on-one coaching
Internships
At churches and at faith-based community organizations
Story Telling
Tell their stories & worship together
Conferences
Identify Global conferences for global network
Individual Vision & Mission
Identify skills necessary to support Vision & Mission, and support spiritual development
Showcase Talent
Identify speaking engagements
Skills Development
Identify resources to prepare & enhance skills
Celebration & Beyond WAM
WAM graduates participants at functions and helps to place them in leadership roles at leading Non-profit organizations


EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
CFO/ACCOUNTANT
MARKETING
PROGRAM MANAGER
OPERATIONS
SPIRITUAL COUNSELOR
RESEARCH &
DEVELOPMENT
EVENTS MANAGER

PLACEMENT & RETENTION STRATEGIES

> The most exciting thing about women's liberation is that this century will be able to take advantage of talent and potential genius that have been wasted because of taboos.[122]

What are the potential solutions to breaking the glass ceiling? There must be a way to cultivate a pipeline that can diversify the talent pool to include more women and their talents. Thus, WAM will widen the leadership pipeline by training and mentoring women to be ready for their destiny as leaders.

WAM's agenda is to help women rise above patriarchal systems in society and in the various holy sacred text, creating unity both between the sexes and between women. This will affirm the divine mandate that God is everything. Marginalization is a worldly creation, and we cannot restrict and bind God to our own worldviews and idiosyncrasies. We must call for an end to second-class citizenship and gender bias. We can obliterate these negative dividers together as a community. WAM will uphold the tenet that "you will not let what humankind (male or female) may say or do, keep you from doing the will of the Lord or from using the gifts you have for the good of others."[123]

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[122] Helen Reddy. *2InspireDaily.com*, http://www.2inspiredaily.com/Daily_Motivational _Quotes (accessed September 2010).

[123] Andrews, *Sisters of the Spirit*, 21.

COLLABORATION STRATEGY

Collaboration will be core to WAM's model. Collaboration allows for compromise and understanding. It is the place where we leave our insecurities and idiosyncrasies at the door and instead we attempt to find ways to combine our abilities. It means seeking and finding God in one another, and it benefits the constituents that we are aiming to serve. Women have the agency to improve their collaborations with men. Men and women need to work together in a culture of peace and collaboration.

Suzan Johnson Cook, Ambassador for Religious Freedom and the first woman Chaplain for the NYPD, exemplifies the collaborative spirit that women leaders should embrace:

> After 9/11, she helped traumatized police officers and worked with the city's Muslim leaders. She had taken religious delegations to Israel, Jordan and Egypt and was the first female senior pastor in the 200-year history of the American Baptist Churches USA. She says: "None of those accomplishments came through razzle-dazzle. but through building consensus, that is diplomacy."

Collaborative partnerships must be built to create a pipeline of leading women. This pipeline would result in a new generation of transformational leaders that are participating in social change efforts. Increased participation and intentional focus will result in benefits for the entire community.

In the long-term, we envision that our collaboration with male pastoral leaders, women focused organizations and financial supporters, will help WAM advance new models of leadership that will inspire a generation of transformational leaders to take up their calling to be of service to God.

This targeted investment towards personal development and growth will enable WAM to foster the change necessary to end women's exclusion. Through WAM, women leaders will become more self-reliant through their increased capacity to keep

focused and to mobilize the church community. Ultimately, through sustained partnerships, WAM can increase its ability to re-shape the landscape for women of faith.

WAM'S SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Women who aspire to become congregational and faith leaders need personal, professional and spiritual support. WAM's programming will include various services and activities that meet women's leadership needs.

Mentorship

Mentoring is a tool that can facilitate women's career growth. For women in the ministry, it is a way to get personal and professional support and in turn grow from that experience. One effective method for reaching a state of self-awareness is to have a non-judgmental sounding board who reviews a person's circumstances and obstacles and who then offer's that person a different perspective.

Mentorship will give WAM women feedback in a safe environment. Feedback is seldom given in the ministry setting unless it is negative feedback. One needs to have a balance between good and bad feedback so that "feedback" itself does not become a forbidden word and something that women avoid. WAM mentors will share what they have learned to ensure that the next person does not make the same mistakes. Thus, through mentorship, we can usher in a stronger generation of women in ministry.

Executive Coaching

Women must be audacious in our leadership, and we also need to be authentic with ourselves. The capacity to see God combined with the capacity to see one's authentic self enlightens the person who combines the two skills. Executive coaching is a coaching method that will focus on the women's professional selves. It will give them concrete strategies to be better leaders. The goals of WAM's executive coaching will be to:

- help women get out of their own way
- enable women to reach their fullest potential
- enrich women's life experiences within the professional environment

Story-telling

When a woman shares her story, it is an opportunity to take inventory of the past. By understanding the past, women leaders can better handle their role in the present. If we are not aware of our own story, and if we never have the opportunity to testify, we may not fully understand our journey or our purpose in life.

Celebration

Women connect with each other differently and provide support systems to deal with stress and difficult life experiences. We share from our souls with our sisters, mothers, and friends, and this is good for our health. In our busy lives of ministry, we need time for celebration with other women.

Other Elements

In addition to the professional support and celebration, WAM will also incorporate other programmatic elements to fully support women congregational leaders. These include, but will not be limited to, partnerships with women-focused organizations; internships for WAM participants: conferences for skill-building and networking; and programs to showcase the God-given talents of WAM leaders.

THE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

As we have seen in the Church, ministry reveals itself in many ways. Effective women ministers work in a way that serves God and humanity. We will launch a leadership institute that serves both faith-leaders and women from other sectors.

The vision is for a comprehensive leadership enhancement institute, located at a top liberal arts university. The Institute will service undergraduate women and introduce them to a career track and offer them leadership development programs. The Institute will, also, service post-graduate career women to strengthen or re-direct their career track and to master effective leadership and sustainability.

The goals of the WAM Leadership Institute will be to raise the numbers of women in the leadership pool, particularly where few serve currently, and to increase the tenure and retention of women leaders. The Leadership Institute will aim to achieve the following objectives:

1. Increasing self-awareness of aptitude, strengths and weaknesses
2. Developing leadership styles
3. Creating a track that is interesting and sustainable
4. Providing support and mentorship during the early development stages
5. Engaging seasoned leaders and mentors and financial supporters

In particular, it will be an institute for inspiring women to take on non-traditional leadership models in corporate and religious sectors. In these arenas, it is quite common for women to be a critical part of the support team: without her involvement the team does not succeed. Often times a woman or team of women is driving the work behind the scenes. She is managing the staff, coordinating calendars, activities and relationships in

order for the male leader to be successful. Rarely will these women seek the lead position and they are rarely encouraged to use their experience to lead. Also, unlike male leaders, the women who do lead often pay the expense of trading precious family time. It might be helpful as we provide training and support for women that we provide parallel support for men who will engage as stewards of these relationships.

The Institute will also support women in traditional leadership roles at non-profit, government, and education organizations. Even if women may hold more roles of leadership in these sectors, men are still overwhelmingly at the top of the hierarchy. Strengthening women in these jobs would go a long way towards creating an environment that nurtures women and appreciates their talents.

WAM will prioritize maintaining a culturally inclusive environment that values developing the individual. In addition to achieving the goals of increasing the numbers of women leaders and their length of service, there is a real opportunity to provide a rich experience that enhances their personal skill sets so that there is a succession tract, where women are able to move along from one leadership experience to another. Much stagnation can be attributed to a lack of growth opportunities.

WAM WORKSHOPS

In addition to specific programming to support women congregational leaders, WAM will offer a series of workshops. Some possible workshop titles are "Learning How to Reconcile with God;" "Reclaim Inner Power;" "Healing;" "The Art of Collaboration;" and "Seeing God in God's Fullness."

I think that the "Lesson from the Geese," written by naturalist Milton Olson,[124] would be one way that we can structure a series WAM workshops to enhance women's competencies in different areas.

Lesson #1: Connections

> As each bird flaps its wings it creates uplift for the bird following. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock ads 71% greater range than if the bird flew alone.
>
> *The lesson: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.*

This workshop will focus on creating friendship circles, because many people feel isolated or do not have people who share their interest. As adults, it can sometimes be difficult to meet new people. This workshop will also teach participants how to connect using social networking tools

Lesson #2: Financial Empowerment

> Whenever a goose falls out of formation it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front.
>
> *The lesson: If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed where we want to go and we will be willing to accept their Help as well as give ours to others.*

[124] Milton Olson, "Lessons from Geese," http://www.kubik.org/lighter/geese.htm (accessed July 2010).

A workshop on financial empowerment will help the women leaders to avoid trying to fix things on their own. Through mutual support, they can help each other to obtain financial freedom, which will benefit other areas of their personal and professional lives.

Lesson #3: Personal Ministry

> When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into formation and another goose flies at the point of position.
>
> *The lesson: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. With people, as with geese, we are interdependent on each other*.

This workshop will help individuals to understand their calling and give them the skills to be effective volunteers. It will teach them how to accept help and to avoid reinventing the wheel by leveraging existing support.

Lesson #4: Living Simply

> The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.
>
> *The lesson: We need to make sure that our honking from behind is encouraging*

We will encourage women to live simply by provide a workshop on this topic, and by also focusing on business skills that can make their lives simpler. The workshop will help the women to encourage each other in the effort.

Lesson #5: Living a Healthy Life

> When a goose gets sick or wounded or is shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it is able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own with another formation or catch up with their flock.
>
> *The lesson: If we have as much sense as geese, we too will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong!*

This workshop will focus on helping women to lead a healthy life. They will also be able to support each other, and work together to exercise, to get outdoors, and to eat healthier.

THE WAM WORSHIP CENTER

Another feature we will want to seriously consider for WAM is to have a worship center that can be both a training ground, and a place for spiritual retreat for WAM members. At the worship center, WAM women would be practicing preaching, pastoral care, the design and implementation of ministries, or learning church doctrine. This will help us to give participants demonstrable experience, which will help them as they seek out ministerial placement. One of the features lacking in many seminary programs is the opportunity to have relationships with churches where seminarians will have a training ground while in school. WAM Worship Center could be that space for women in ministry. The worship center will welcome men, and therefore be a great chance to practice working together on God's mission.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Collaborative partnerships must be built to create a pipeline of leading women, who can strengthen both congregations as well as women-focused organizations (if the leader chooses to minister through service). This pipeline would result in a new generation of transformational leaders that are participating in social change efforts. This increased participation and intentional focus will result in a greater number of opportunities to strengthen churches and women's empowerment organizations that will have a greater impact on an increasingly larger scale.

In the long-term, we envision that our collaboration with male pastoral leaders, women focused organizations and financial supporters will help WAM advance new models of leadership. In turn, this targeted investment in women will lead to the change we need to see happen for women leaders. This will make women leaders become more self-reliant through their increased capacity to keep focus, and to mobilize and sustain the church community. Ultimately, through sustained partnerships, WAM can help increase the power of women leaders to positively impact issues.

In the short-term, we may consider a pilot project to be launched with Intersections and New York Theological Seminary (NYTS) to educate and mobilize emerging women leaders in seminary or who are working at churches through the following activities:

- Host educational forums (curriculum co-branded with Intersections and NYTS) that will address the needs of women in ministry;

- Launch of the first conference with the theme of "collaboration" to include male pastoral male leaders, to introduce WAM, and to seek their council and partnership.; and
- Bring together potential financial sponsors to introduce a few of the women leaders that would be students of WAM

Gauging potential financial support is a critical part of this journey. This conversation is a priority for many donors and foundations focused on the promotion and empowerment of women. Our goal is to identify a few who can be silent supporters prior to the official launch of the program. The organizations listed below represent the types of organization that would make good partners for WAM:

FORD Foundation[125]

> Created with gifts and bequests by Edsel and Henry Ford, the foundation is an independent, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization, with its own board, and is entirely separate from the Ford Motor Company. The trustees of the foundation set policy and delegate authority to the president and senior staff for the foundation's grant making and operations. Program officers in the United States, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America explore opportunities to pursue the foundation's goals, formulate strategies and recommend proposals for funding. The Ford Foundation supports visionary leaders and organizations on the frontlines of social change worldwide.

AME Church: Women in Ministry[126]

> Women in Ministry (WIM) in the African Methodist Episcopal Church is an international organization serving the continental United States, Africa, India, the Caribbean, and Europe. WIM operates within each of the 20 Episcopal Districts that define the African Methodist Episcopal Church and are led by an Executive Board elected by members - women preachers across our entire Connectional Church. At each level of our AME Church, (Episcopal Districts, Annual Conferences, and Presiding Elder Districts,) we have officers who serve our international network of preaching women of the gospel of Jesus Christ within our Zion. We currently have over three thousand, three hundred and fifty women in ministry worldwide in the African Methodist Episcopal Church…The mission of AME/WIM is to define, enhance, support and expand the presence of women in ministry in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.

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[125] Ford Foundation, http://www.fordfound.org (accessed April 2010).

[126] African Methodist Episcopal Church, http://www.ame-church.com (accessed April 2010).

Total Grace Christian Center[127]

Total Grace Christian Center exists to be a Spirit-filled, multi-cultural, worshipping community, developing people into Christian disciples. Our mission is to change lives by reaching and equipping people through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Women Donors Network (WDN)[128]

WDN is an organization that thinks outside the box. They present a year of programming that solidifies their vision and leads them to concrete actions. Building on the work of LEAD(Leadership, Education & Development) Committee, WDN developed three complementary streams of programming 'Investing in Your Voice To Lead for Change'; 'Organizing for Collective Action'; 'Building and Strengthening their Committee'.

Twenty-First Century Foundation[129]

The mission of the Twenty-First Century Foundation is to lead, innovate and influence giving for Black community change. As one of the few, endowed, Black foundations in the U.S., 21CF works to advance the welfare of the Black community through strategic and collective grant making; special initiatives and research; donor education and donor services.

[127] Total Grace Christian Center, http://www.totalgrace.org (accessed April 2010).

[128] Women Donors Network, http://www.womendonors.org (accessed April 2010).

[129] Twenty-First Century Foundation, http://www.21cf.org (accessed April 2010).

CHAPTER VI:

CONCLUSION

> Until women can visualize the sacred female they cannot be whole and society cannot be whole.[130]
> ~ Elinor Gadon

When we heal women, we heal the world. At the start of this journey, when I was conceptualizing my demonstration project, I knew that I had to fulfill God's calling. I saw a world of inequity, where 70 percent of the poor are women and girls, but only 3 percent hold positions of power in the workforce.[131] Furthermore, I saw the spiritual pain that both women and men experience.

Religion and maintaining a relationship with the Creator, have been supportive forces helping me through a tough life of beating the odds—one where I started in Haiti, and ended up on Wall Street. The blessings I have received are evidence that "faith in…Jesus Christ is the sole fountainhead of all good."[132] However, many crimes in society have been committed under the watch of religion and in the name of God.

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[130] Elinor Gadon. *The Once and Future Goddess: A symbol for Our Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989).

[131] Magdalena I. Garcia, *Toward a Liberating Faith-Introduction to Women Theology.* (Louisville, Kentucky: Presbyterian Distribution Service PDS, 2001), 24.

[132] Rasmussen, Dietrich *Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance*, 155.

Justification for such monstrosities has been based on convenient interpretations of the sacred Text. If only religion and faith were needed to get through our lives, we would fail as a society, because we would be at the mercy of our biased individual interpretations.

I am convinced that living out my mission, to become an ordained minister and to launch Women's Anointed Mission (WAM), is the best use of my God-given gifts. Existing examples of women's extraordinary leadership through time, whether in the Bible, or in history, are inspiring proof that we can overcome even the toughest challenges.

WAM will be space that accepts the complexity of our world and our spirits, acknowledging that:

> We are human beings with enormous diversity and difference. We come from different walks of life, just like any other group. We should, however, be capable of respecting each other and not inflicting unnecessary pain onto each other. We need to take personal, historical, and community inventory of our lives and get to the root of our pain and anger so that we don't recycle it to our children, families, friends, and others in our communities.[133]

I am not calling for us to be "one big happy family" that is perfect and agrees all the time. Rather, I am calling for WAM to exist to encourage dialogue and to help women congregational leaders to see the complexities with greater understanding; additionally, I charge WAM with being part of the spiritual fabric that helps to mend our relationships with God. This way, we can better equip women as they step into pulpits around the world.

[133] Sophia A. Nelson, *Black Woman Redefined* (Dallas, Texas: BenBella Books, Inc., 2011), 253.

HEAL SPIRITUAL WOUNDS

> Power-Within is the power of one's own inner wisdom, intuition, self-esteem, even the spark of the divine. Theology that values power-within is joyfully incarnational, celebrating the inherent goodness or "original blessing" implanted in the human being, not preoccupied with human sinfulness but rather with human goodness and inspiration. It is an enthusiastic theology in the etymological sense of the word: en-theos, "God within." [134]

Both the problem of women's exclusion from congregational leadership, and the solutions that we need, are related to our relationship with the Creator. We are right to adopt devout practices and to keep faith, yet we must accept the pain that is part of the experience—pain from falling from God's grace, and pain from inequality in the physical world. WAM is a vehicle for those ready to reconcile with God.

"Because nature knows nothing of the self-transcendence, self-identity and freedom which are the real marks of individuality,"[135] then we need religion in our society to help complete the picture. For this reason, it is urgent that we heal our pain as part of fixing the discrepancies in leadership.

Men can play a role, whether knowingly or unknowingly, in adding to women's insecurities and their wounded-ness. When that happens, women retract and men take over. They can become condescending, and women experience a negative self-image of who they are or who they can be as leaders. Women need to face their inner demons as part of the leadership development process. Women need to realize their inner strength through their Creator and persevere. They need to tap into their inner courage and know that they are worthy and acknowledged by their Creator, and that they are capable, and blessed with God-given talents.

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[134] Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1995), 33.

[135] Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 92.

The only work we have to do in life is salvation work; it is about reconciling with God and teaching others to do the same. Romans 8:22-25 shows us that pain is a necessary part of life that can lead to positive growth:

> All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it is not only around us, it is within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We are also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us; any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become and the more joyful our expectancy.

By healing what is going on within and focusing on forgiving ourselves and others, we stumble unto a salvation, peace, and harmony.

The healing must extend beyond the individual to the community. We need to get our society on the right track of equality. We cannot build hierarchy between men and women, because God did not do that nor did He intend those divisions to separate God's children. We cannot tamper with the equal order that God has put in place and still expect peace within ourselves or the world. Our fall from grace has led to a patriarchic society. As our society evolves, transforms and emerge, we need to always aim to going back to God's original design of equality and upkeep. Exclusion of anyone is not an option in God's design of the world.

We are living beings embodying the spirit of God within us. Therefore, we are to find solutions to our problems as a community not away from God's terms and guidance. The Text, Genesis 1:27-28, shows us that we are all called by God to use our gifts:

> God created human beings; God created them Godlike, Reflecting God's nature. God created them male and female. God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take Charge!"

When we are filled with the spirit, we are inspired, compelled and driven to act on behalf of God in the world to bring equality and love to others. God wants us to live in full harmony with Him and each other, and WAM will guide women to reach reconciliation.

QUESTION ACCEPTED TRUTHS AND MAINTAIN HUMILITY

Science and mathematics are culture-specific rather than universally true. [136]

Outdated stereotypes may call for women to be silent, but WAM will train women to trust their voice and, most importantly, to ask questions. Women of faith must question their sacred Texts, and challenge truths within their religion and society, in order to become powerful authorities on God's word.

I recognized this importance as I grew as a minister. I learned that I became closer to God when I took into account the "worldly" context of religious writing. The author's identity, contextual location for writing the text, and the audience he or she is speaking to, all matter. As a spiritual leader, if I fail to engage the text in this way, then I risk inaccurately interpreting God's word. Scriptural interpretation is empowering for ministers, and it also allowed me to deepen my understanding of the text, and by extension the problem I seek to resolve: women's exclusion from congregational leadership. Through a feminist hermeneutic, I am able to reconcile my pain as a woman who often felt overlooked in the text, and in my daily life.

Understanding the text is a two-way relationship between the author and the reader. It sparks imagination and creativity because it awakens understanding. The text is a visual of history, the present and/or the potential future, based on the reader's perception at one time and place. Hermeneutics is critical because it frees us of the constraints of the author and the societal norms of the time. The intermarriage between the reader and the writer is what makes Text come to life.

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[136] Clyde J. Steckel, *New Ecclesiology & Polity: The United Church of Christ* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2009), 39.

Humility is also an important factor in exegesis of the text because we need to be quiet to hear the beauty that God's word offers. Humility anchors us in our relationship with the Creator and is vital to mountaintop living. Mountaintop living is when you have heard from the Lord and you are experiencing your spiritual peak.

It is also a virtue held in high esteem in many religious traditions, and it is connected with notions of transcendent unity with the divine. When women combine humility with the courage to challenge accepted truths, they grow closer to God through the close interaction with the text.

EMBRACE DIVERSITY AND A MULTI-FAITH APPROACH

> We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.
> ~ Martin Luther King Jr.

My interpretation of Jesus' message is that only through a life disciplined in love for God, and complete obedience to God's work in the world, does one truly live. Everything else is an illusion. Since God has unconditional love for us, we are commanded to share that love equally with others. Jesus says that love for Him and God is above everything else. What I understand about the sovereignty of God is that I am of God and for God. I am to fully surrender to the love and work of God by loving my brothers and sisters, and especially myself, because we are all made in the image of God.

From this foundation, I have followed Jesus' example in my ministry, and I have embraced a multi-faith approach. My research has shown that this is a powerful element for building women's leadership, and it is also a means to grasp God's manifestation with greater clarity. I plan to bring the multi-faith approach to WAM's programming. WAM will also view diversity in communities as a strength.

Our communities are composed of various groups of people with different cultural background and histories. All of that breath of differences are integrated and co-exist in the global community. In today's competitive society and markets, there can be a lack of trust and skepticism which fuels a territorial attitude; when people behave in this way, they show little desire to exercise the God within. The specific issue of women's exclusion from congregational leadership is one example of the negative results of this behavior.

It would be a futile effort to hold onto an idealistic view of "one supreme religion" or "one superior culture." As I thought about the importance of diversity to

WAM, I drew inspiration from M. M. Shan Winn's approach, which sets the context on the origin of beliefs and shared values that interchanged due to migration. What divides us actually founded us. Understanding the origin of our traditions can help us transform, amend and evolve these traditions to best suit our modern age. Winn said that:

> Movements of people occurred intermittently for at least 1500 years - beginning before 4000 B.C. and continuing until about 2500 B.C. An array of shared cultural and linguistic features was, as a result, distributed over a large area. At the same time, the protoculture disintegrated.[137]

We are increasingly interconnected in our technology-driven global society; in a way, we are returning to our origin. Therefore, diversity is an asset, not a deficit.

The multi-faith approach is vehicle for building women's strength collectively, and for bringing them together across differences. Sexism is an issue that touches all women, regardless of their faith, class, race, ethnicity or country of origin. By bringing women together across differences, we destroy the notion of "the other." Religious differences may seem especially stubborn, but many religious beliefs require similar characteristics that deliver God's example. These examples are to love mankind and to be faithful to one God. WAM participants will begin from this common place.

After field work, research, exegesis, and conversations with women leaders, I believe that two vital best practices for a multi-faith ministerial strategy are:

- To keep an open heart and remember that we are all God's children. Let everything we do begin with His inspiration, and continue with His grace to an eventually happy end in His joy with our deeds; and
- To ensure that no person is a stranger, regardless of their faith, for God's word is embedded in each of our hearts. The lack of women's' leadership voices on

[137] Shan M.M. Winn, *Heaven, Heroes, and Happiness: The Indo-European Roots of Western Ideology* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1995), 43.

the pulpit is a tragedy for the world at large. Therefore, beyond including the "other," we need to get past our gender/sexism issue as well.

To conquer sexism, women must rise across difference to support each other as leaders, and to organize to change sexist ideas in their communities.

WAM will reach beyond the usual borders of religions to find jewels of guidance that can benefit all women.

> In the East, the situation is very different indeed. There are lively goddess traditions in almost every region except those areas exclusively dominated by Islam (which of course, is a continuation, or variant, of the Judeo-Christian tradition and is equally uncomfortable with female divine imagery). The goddesses of the East, furthermore, as we have seen, are not stereotypical. There is a rich diversity among them. They do not seem to be mere male stereotypes about women projected to a spiritual realm. They often play male roles and violate codes of behavior dictated for women. Many of these Eastern goddesses seem to underline the point that theology (mythology, spirituality) is much more than a reflection of the social sphere.[138]

The opportunities for impacting the world and making a difference are many. Women congregational leaders can flourish in their leadership and ministries if we break the glass ceiling that constrains women's imagination, vision and eventually their spirit. Oppressing women, holds the world back from transformation.

[138] Kinsley, *The Goddesses Mirror, Vision of the Divine from East and West*, 263.

TESTIFY

> I freed thousands of slaves. I could have freed thousands more, if they had known they were slaves.
> ~ Harriet Tubman

For women to be strong ministers, they must arrive in leadership as reasonably whole people. This means that their life experiences, their pain and their joy, must inform and shape their personal theology. In this way, they can more fully share God's love with the world. "Without a human response or a community reception, Scripture fails to show life;"[139] Therefore, WAM will value women's life experiences and their personal testimonies.

My personal testimony amplifies God's calling on my life. I know that God gives us what we need, and He sends us messages in ways we may or may not understand. We need to say thank you to God regardless of the obvious tough circumstances we are presented with. Five years ago I was diagnosed with a blood clot in my right leg. That regrettably meant less traveling and entertaining. However, it opened up the doors for me to start my journey in seminary. My testimony extended my analysis of holy text, and showed me that I have the gifts to launch WAM and to be a part of the solution to end sexism in faith communities.

WAM will use story-telling, dialogue, and structured workshops, to give women leaders space to reflect, and time to look into their personal testimonies to find understanding of their calling. Women who develop a theology informed by their life experience enhance their pastoral practice.

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[139] Smith, *What Is Scripture?: A Comparative Approach,* 21.

EMBRACE GOD'S POWER

The truth is that women, although invisible and ignored at times, enjoy a rich tradition of leadership, with inspiring examples of both men and women faith leaders who have changed the world and played an influential role in our religious texts. God has blessed us all with power, and with talents, which we must use them in service to His kingdom.

I listed earlier the powerful women from the Bible. Other women who we can look to for inspiration, women who propelled their communities to change, are:

> *Hagar*, [who] was at the mercy of someone else's selfish ambition and experienced the greatest magnitude of agony and ache yet persevered with God's grace;
>
> *Hannah* lived a life of total surrender to God in a time when others were looking away from God and she was rewarded greatly;
>
> *Abigail* mastered all her God given gifts to save her community despite the risks involved to her own well being; and
>
> *Jochebed* carried in her womb God's master plan for the deliverance of His people in Israel, her son Moses.[140]

The journey to make change in the world is ongoing and moves from generation to generation, from biblical times until now. It is never easy, yet overcoming obstacles in our world has been the inspiration we lean on as old challenges disappear and we face new ones.

The past offers to modern ministers insightful theologians, whose interpretations can be valuable. Theologians such as Archbishop Oscar Romero, stood up courageously against the greed that he saw ravishing his country and imprisoning its citizens. Faith leaders have lived at the intersections of heeding God's call while taking on social change as a way to realize God's kingdom of equality on Earth.

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[140] Bailey-Jones, *Women Risktakers*, 4, 53, 85, 121, 147.

For Archbishop Romero, in order "to be like Jesus, to be in communion with God, and to speak with God and to speak about God, meant above all making God's will concrete and effective."[141] WAM will lift up courageous examples of faith leaders, while also incorporating figures from the secular world. Since sexism extends beyond the church wall to the intimate corners of our lives, then we must look beyond the church for solutions.

By harnessing our God-given gift to be of use to face worldly challenges, we extend the legacy of great leaders, women and men, from all walks of life. By surrendering to our inner light, we garner strength and courage to speak truth to power, push back on dogma and manmade rules, demand our rights and take actions that can transform a society for all our good.

[141] Sobrino, Ignacio Martin-Baro, "A Theologian View of Oscar Romero-Voice of the Voiceless," http://flyingfarther.wordpress.com/category/oscar-romero/ (accessed August 15, 2008).

SUPPORT LEADERSHIP THROUGH WOMEN'S ANOINTED MISSION

WAM will not only be a point of service for participants, but it will be a chance for them to have agency in the solution—to be part of the movement to end sexism and to heal our relationship with the Creator. The vehicles for leadership development in WAM will include scriptural study, mentoring, dialogue, story-telling, guiding personal development workshops, internships, and more.

The vision and mission of WAM is to be a global, multi-faith and comprehensive women's intervention strategy. It will encompass a broad set of programs to inspire, empower and lead women in ministry to achieve their full potential and to assume roles in Church leadership, and to employ their God-given. WAM will be a training ground for women ministers. It will research issues, support faith communities, and create forums to discuss and evaluate the necessity to end the exclusion of women from congregational leadership.

WAM can partner with other organizations that align with its interest in elevating women. Finding strong partners will be a critical step prior to the launch of WAM. Additionally, we will need to identify the early participants, and design curricula for various topics, such as delivering sermons, and providing spiritual counseling. My demonstration project, while comprehensive, cannot realistically encompass all the relevant data (to women's condition) that exists. WAM will use further examination of the facts and statistics across industries to drive results.

In WAM's early stages after its launch, we will focus on evolving the mission and vision of WAM with the input of stakeholders, and on refining and implementing WAM's leadership and organizational structure. The third major task we will accomplish

is to leverage the God-given gifts of our supporters and volunteers to assign and delegate work projects.

In our lives we walk with God. WAM will walk with its members along the path of their destiny and purpose, as they identify and conquer obstacles. It will also model the world we wish to see, by including men along the way as part of the support network. "Sometimes in life," says Dr. Patricia Bailey-Jones, "in order to take the leap of faith, we must face and confront the habits, fears, or any other hindrances constraining us."[142] WAM will travel with women along their spiritual journey, as they advance solutions that benefit the church and the world. Together, we will leap to our full potential.

[142] Bailey-Jones, *Women Risktakers*, vi.

TRUST GOD, WALK BOLDLY

> You will not let what man may say or do, keep you from doing the will of the Lord or using the gifts you have for the good of others.[143]

The culmination of my life testimony, my corporate career, my seminary studies, and my experiences as a woman minister, are my commitment to answering God's call. Regardless of what faces me, I will be brave, trust in God, and make Women's Anointed Mission a reality. We are under-utilizing—both men and women—our God-given talents. I can be one positive leader who, through God's grace, unleashes our collective power through a strategic, and pointed effort.

Looking ahead, everyone, both the devout and the non-devout, must unite to fix the problems that plague us. We need faith and religion today. Religion has always been a crucial part of the history of the United States. Our Founding Fathers recognized that every individual has a right to achieve a sense of belonging in the community. By making the law religious-neutral, the system allows everyone to have their own unique voice, without imposing a state-endorsed religion.[144]

Men and women combining their talents is the realization of God's intention for His children. We can end the hurt of sexism with sensitive reflection and by validating women's experiences. We can reconcile our heart with the Creator if we unleash women in pulpits around the world. I thank God for showing me this path in life, and I am honored to live out His mission through Women's Anointed Mission.

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[143] Andrews, *Sisters of the Spirit*, 21.

[144] Richard R. Hammar, *Church & Law*, Third Edition (Matthews, North Carolina: Christian Ministry Resources, 2000), 35.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

WOMEN'S ANOINTED MISSION (WAM)

DEVELOPING WOMEN FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

BY

NADJA FIDELIA

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT
Submitted to
New York Theological Seminary
November 1st, 2010

Challenge Statement

Across faith traditions, of the "2,740 congregations studied, women lead 8%, and only 5% of American churchgoers attend a congregation led by a woman," according to the 2006-2007 National Congregations Study. As a Haitian immigrant, licensed woman minister, a 20 year Wall Street executive, a founder of a woman leadership program and a candidate for ordination at Grace Congregational United Church of Christ, Harlem, NY, I witnessed the disparity of ordained women leaders. If this issue is not addressed, the purpose and destiny of women in leadership roles within the faith based community will remain hindered and inhibit church growth. This demonstration project will encompass a global comprehensive women's intervention strategy to empower and lead women to be assertive in their efforts to assume pastoral and other leadership roles.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

As a woman of color, licensed Minister, Haitian immigrant, single mother, raised in a family that value Catholicism, I learned the conflicts that scripture could cause as we individually define our own theology. It was critical for me to be grounded in a denomination that advocates justice and embraces the leadership of all specifically women. The United Church of Christ mantra is all about inclusion that is necessary to do ministry in the will of God who is all inclusive. God's revelation is still taking place in the world and both women and men called to ministry are part of God's movement.

As a candidate for ordination at Grace Congregational United Church of Christ (Grace), in Harlem, NY, I witness the disparity of ordained women leaders.

> Grace is the third occupant of the Romanesque building which was designed and built in 1892 by Joseph Ireland as Lenox Presbyterian Church. In 1905, the Presbyterians moved to what is now St. James Presbyterian Church on 141st Street and St. Nicholas Avenue, and Swedish Immanuel Congregational Church took possession of the building. In 1923, Grace Congregational Church of Harlem, along with the Harlem Congregational Church of West 138 Street, moved into the present building. The Rev. Alexander C. Garner, D.D. Pastor, Grace Church, 1922-1938 Alexander C. Garner was ordained in the First Congregational Church of Chicago. He held many offices of distinction in the denomination and the community. The Doctorate of Divinity was conferred upon him by Howard University, Washington D.C. in June 1908. Being commissioned by New York State Conference of Congregational Churches to establish Grace Church; He became thus its founder, organizer, teacher and first pastor.[145]

[145] Grace Congregational Church of Harlem, UCC, http://gracecongregationalucc.org (accessed November 2010).

I can honestly express my disappointment when I joined Grace a United Church of Christ denomination church and then found out, that since inception in 1923, there has been only one ordained women minister. This ordination occurred in 2008. I see this phenomenon as a failed opportunity in Grace's history. So the question is why is this fact about Grace a reality? What could have been done for this church to have followed the leadership of their mother church? How has old traditions and scripture play a role in keeping this congregation closed to women leadership? Grace has remained exclusive while the United Church of Christ continues to make women leadership issue one of their top priorities as their statistics point below:

> This year UCC celebrates the 150th anniversary of the first woman ordained in their tradition, and, for that matter, in any major Protestant denomination. In 1889, over 30 years after her ordination, there were only four ordained Congregational women listed in the annual Congregational yearbook. By 1899, that number had risen to 49. In 1920, a commission on the status of clergywomen in Congregationalism reported that there were 67 ordained women out of 5,695 clergy. It took the 1970's before these small percentages made dramatic increases. Today there are 2,832 ordained women (27 percent) out of the 10,321 active, non-retired clergy in the UCC.[146]

Some blame tradition and scripture. The Feminist theology argues that the language "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" prove that the Christian doctrine of the triune God is inescapably and irreformably sexist?[147] But, if we look at God as neither male nor female and the triune as an explanation of how God works from our observation in scripture, historical and present context, we can focus on what Niebuhr pointed to:

> The real evil in the human situation according to the prophetic interpretation lies inman's unwillingness to recognize and acknowledge the weakness, finiteness and dependence of his position. Sin the unwillingness of man to acknowledge his dependence upon God and his effort to make his own life independent and secure.[148]

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[146] United Church of Christ, "UCC celebrates an anniversary: 150 years of women clergy," http://www.ucc.org/ucnews/sep03/ucc-celebrates-an.html.

[147] Daniel L. Migloire, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 67.

[148] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press 1996), 137.

God is in us, works through us, and is with us in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Our complete surrender to our true nature in God is the only window to truth and salvation. My life serves as complete testimony and proof of God and how He works in our lives. I could have been just another negative statistic. Having been born in the poorest country in the western hemisphere with very little means, with a father that was a political refugee, the expectation that I would find my way in the United States, survived child abuse, accomplished a 20 year successful career at an investment banking firm and becoming their top woman of color executive during my tenure, establish a financially and emotionally stable family and an opportunity to give back intellectually, financially and spiritually is anything short of a miracle. My journey and experiences good and bad were always for the benefit of what God has in store for me to do. When I look at my daily activities, I see a mentor, a teacher, an advocate, a champion and a healer. These are the roles I play every day no matter what I am confronted with. My greatest joy in life has been my ability to relate to people with a keen sense of their needs and wants. I attribute that to my "practical intelligence" as described by William Thourlby in his book "*Women: The New Power Class."* This means that "I have the ability to see patterns quickly among the confusion and somehow seem to know what has to be done or at least how to negotiate a resolution to each problem."[149] Now as a licensed Minister in New York City and a Doctorate of Ministry second-year student in the Multifaith concentration, I am prepared and preparing to do God's work. I am ready to use my time, money, prayers and training as a public speaker and pastoral care practitioner. I am also eager to represent feminine leaders in pastoral service. In a male-dominated

[149] William Thourlby, *Women The New Power Class* (New York: Forbes/Wittenburg & Brown, 2002), chapter 5.

environment, I intend to be part of the influence to change and better reflect the contribution of all. It will be a transformational and transcending experience for me as I get to impact my environment and my world, and in the process, make my life purposeful.

As Nan Mooney points out in her book, "*I Can't Believe She Did That*," we live in a society where organizational culture still works against women. Subtle and not so subtle forms of sexism and gender discrimination continue to proliferate,[150] my Multifaith network project will be for women from all faiths who are challenged by a lack of inclusion and facing stereotypes such as: women are too controlling, too focused on petty details, too critical, too jealous, and to unwilling to delegate,[151] and lack professional leadership training in ministry and in their careers in comparison to their male counterparts. While women sometimes carry this torch of blame, they also possess all of the skills necessary to be effective leaders. Women have the ability to multitask, hold families together by creating harmony. They find ways to make everyone feel included and to feel like a winner, or at least not to look or feel like a failure. Women's respect for the basic humanity of each family member has always been a major force in the creation of a strong, functioning family, a family capable of meeting the stresses and strain of everyday life. Religious communities function in many ways like family systems. Their internal dynamics are structured by formal, informal, and implicit rules that arise through evolutionary processes and/or are brought to the community from the individual

[150] Nan Mooney, *I Can't Believe She did That!* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 125.

[151] Mooney, *I Can't Believe She Did That!*, 113.

backgrounds of its members.[152] Therefore, the intuitive talent that women are bringing to the church from day one makes them ripe for leading the congregation if that is their calling and intention. Women also have great imaginative powers and should find affirmation in Albert Einstein's quote that, "imagination is more powerful than knowledge."[153]

This project is to assess various potential solutions for this problem. We will work perhaps under the umbrella of a non-profit (501(c) 3 organizations or in partnership with a church or a seminary with the shared vision of promoting, empowering and mentoring women in ministry to eradicate their exclusion from ecclesiastical leadership. Grace church could be the platform to launch this project as it could be the first case study. The main goal is to be based in Manhattan, New York where a lot of research and case studies can be studied in depth. Though we would be initiating this project in New York City to start, we would investigate the opportunity if successful to launch a similar effort nationally in the future. We will look to launch a series of focus group event to discuss this issue and openly discuss potential solution with the community at large. We expect that these types of events will help us identify advocates, and partners to broaden the dialogue across faith and congregations. This project will be exclusively geared towards women and would support a "women-as-pastors" program. Nevertheless, we intend to have the participation of men as mentors, advisers and sponsors to remain inclusive in our approach. It is critical to do so for many reasons, such as; men are the gate keepers of most churches and without their help women would be less successful;

[152] Candace R. Benyei, *Understanding Clergy Misconduct in Religious Systems* (New York: The Haworth Pastoral Press, 1998) 18.

[153] Thourlby, *Women The New Power Class*, Chapter 19.

secondly, it is an opportunity for both men and women to understand that by leveraging each other's talents, they can complement the skill set necessary to deliver more leaders to minister to God's people. Men can play a very big role in sponsoring the success of women. Friedrich Nietzsche said: "Only he who is man enough will release the woman in women."[154] Some themes of our dialogues will be to: inspire through sermons, provide advocacy, spiritual counseling, the removing of obstacles, and give each other permission to lead. The context is that most female faith leader's experience many of the same issues that this project intends to address.

This will be a Multifaith initiative. Each faith needs to be examined to identify progress versus the need for progress as we work to eradicate the glass ceiling experienced by women in ministerial leadership. Opportunities for leadership positions are few for women with their voices not heard, or if heard, not understood. Expectations about women's "personal touch have played a major role in defining their position in the workplace."[155]

Scriptures are a major hurdle if they are used to set the rules and the community follows those rules, how can we overcome that phenomenon? We need to have hermeneutical dialogue and discourse. The Multifaith character of my context is that to exegete scripture across faiths have been interpreted such that women should be silent and should not lead in ministry even if their God-given gifts have ordained them to. When an entire community has agreed on a set way of handling the exclusion of women in leadership roles in ministry, it is very difficult for women to overcome these obstacles,

[154] Thourlby, *Women The New Power Class*, Chapter 13.

[155] Mooney, *I Can't Believe She Did That!,* 29.

unless there is an aggressive mentoring movement to make this happen. For women, a career has become possible, but it comes riddled with pressures and tensions that differ markedly from those experienced by our male counterparts.[156] There are so many ways to impact the world and make a difference and flourish in our leadership and ministries if we can crack open this glass ceiling that limits women's imagination, vision and eventually persecutes their spirit. The world would be a better place, with more capacity to resolve other issues that is holding it back from transformation. However, if mother, daughter, wife, or mistress is the female roles with which men feel most comfortable, how can any woman become a professional colleague? Of course, this question is an exaggeration in order to make a point, but the gender problem is real, and a lot of it is buried beneath the surface, in a place where men of all descriptions don't like to go.[157]

Our communities are composed of various groups of people with different cultural background and histories; and therefore, marked by a lack of trust, skepticism that fuels a territorial attitude, with little desire to exercise the God within. As Audre Lord, author of "*Women's Voice*", said, "We have only been taught three ways to handle difference; three ways only. If we think it is dominant, we want to become it. If we think it is inferior, we want to kill it. And if we are not really sure which it is, we want to ignore it."[158] The church's role is quite challenging with a structure in society that cannot be changed and can only be influenced and held accountable. Women need to be grounded in their identity so that they do not show up as **victims** or **less than.** We need

[156] Mooney, *I Can't Believe She Did That!*, xvii.

[157] Price M. Cobbs, Judith L. Turnock, *Cracking The Corporate Cod*e (New York: AMACOM Books, 2003), 18.

[158] Mooney, *I Can't Believe She Did That*!, 27.

to teach each other how to reclaim our power when we feel powerless. Some people think that they are being robbed of their culture and identity, but both can be reclaimed. We need to evolve through awareness. This is a multifaceted issue. As women in ministry, we do not even reach out to women across different careers to get their perspective and be inclusive and supportive of their similar plight. Women are so stuck on the battlefield that they do not recognize that another women is not the enemy. Their lack of support of each other is a major factor in their lack of success in this arena and is a clear sign that the healing within has not occurred. As the oppressed, we become oppressors as well. For the women who prefer not to have a female pastor or support women on their way to that leadership role, how else can you explain not wanting to see a reflection of one's self doing great achievements and excelling in what God has called us to do? As I reflect on the comments of the older generation at my church: "A women can never be my Pastor. It is just not how I was raised." Where is room for growth from this position or perspective? Are women co-opted in their own oppression? "The challenge of the 21st Century is not technology; it is our humanity and humaneness toward one another. If we dare to meet this challenge successfully, we must rethink and bring new understanding, support, and respect to the concept and meaning of womanhood."[159]

Women need to hear the stories of other women globally to obtain perspective and to understand their own story. We need to be our authentic self in order to give permission for others to be their authentic selves. We need to learn to be objective as we attempt to tell each other about our journey. We need to be better active listeners of each other's stories. We need to create the circle of dialogue with a multicultural crowd so that

[159] Thourby, *Women The New Power Class*, Chapter 1.

we may have real growth in our relationships. We need to heal ourselves before trying to help others and the community. At the same time, we must respect the boundaries to avoid too much sharing that can also get in the way of work performance. As women we can share too much with each other in order to establish trust, and sometimes, before the foundation of the relationship is ready. Such ready sharing of confidences can lead us to trust each other before the groundwork for that trust, in the form of time and shared experiences, has been laid.[160] This unique feminine approach can lead to discord and strife when one in the relationship feels betrayed by the other whom they felt they had established trust with.

We seek the vocation of ministry because from the heart, we seek to heal our communities' cry for help. We are usually operating from a calling from God and/or human compassion. However, underneath the genuine urge to foster change, heal and contribute to our society, lurks the psychological demons from our own childhood and life experiences. As human beings, we struggle with many fears. For example, we fear being abandoned, or made to feel powerless and not needed. Therefore, we go into survival mode and prey on each other for a false sense of security. This has a negative impact because our church organizations operate in a survival mode and may subject their community to unethical behaviors that lose the trust and confidence that the community has empowered unto their spiritual leaders. Given that we are driven by these inner struggles, our character and judgment must be in check before taking on a role of clergy or a leadership role in our community. Mooney also points out that fantasies about a workplace as a happy bastion of sisterhood are just that "fantasies." This is

[160] Mooney, *I Can't Believe She Did That*!, 32.

especially true in the Church. Our real-life scripts do not star Cinderella's or evil step-mothers. Instead, they feature real people with shaky self-confidence, thwarted ambitions, buried prejudices, and sexual jealousies.[161] These particular issues are what this project will address first hand as we focus on the relationship of women with each other and in the workplace.

God gives women many gifts and talents for service to humanity. We need to use all of them to do God's Will. This project will focus on women not seeing themselves as victims or men as the other. We can make a choice not to make each other enemies we can choose as co-creators of the male-female partnership in leadership. Women need to ask the hard questions given our innate power in the world and especially in the churches. We are the energy that fuels the church, but we bypass on the leadership roles of this same organization. We need to hold the congregations accountable to their mission and beliefs. If we are really about loving and having faith in God and looking for a way to serve, then why are we so exclusive, selfish and inward looking when we are within the community? We practice what Omarosa Manigault-Stallworth from the Donald Trump reality TV show, The Apprentice, practiced: "I am going to crush my competition, and I am going to enjoy it."[162] Why are there so many "have's versus have not's?" Is the Church just another place where we put on our hypercritical hat and pretend we are doing good while every day we focus solely on the self and its needs? Have we forgotten that our work is for the people? For Christians, scripture informs us of Jesus touch: "He knew them," John 10:14-15; "He touched them," Luke 4:40; "He healed them," Matthew

[161] Mooney, *I Can't Believe She Did That*!, xvi.

[162] Ibid., 22.

15:30; "He affected them," Luke 6:40; "He mentored them," John 13:15-17.[163] Women are spiritual midwives. We are creative enough to birth with the partnership of men a new liberation for women leadership in ministry. We would be utilizing what is naturally our strength.

[163] Hans Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NexGen, 1994, 2000), 45.

CHAPTER II

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

Across faith traditions, "of the 2,740 congregations studied, women lead 8% and only 5% of American church goers attend a congregation led by a woman,"[164] according to the 2006-2007 National Congregations Study. As a Haitian immigrant, licensed woman minister, a 20 year Wall Street executive, a founder of a woman leadership program and a candidate for ordination at Grace Congregational United Church of Christ, Harlem, NY, I witnessed the disparity of ordained women leaders. If this issue is not addressed, the purpose and destiny of women in leadership roles within the faith based community will remain hindered and inhibit church growth. This demonstration project will encompass a global comprehensive women's intervention strategy to empower and lead women to be assertive in their efforts to assume pastoral and other leadership roles.

[164] Mark Chaves, Shawna Anderson and Jason Byassee, "American Congregations at the Beginning of the 21st Century," *National Congregations Study (NCS),* 2006-2007: 5 http://www.soc.duke.edu//natlong/.

CHAPTER III

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES

We must address our theological reasoning. Across religions, women have been excluded and scriptural texts have been used to support this erroneous argument. Nevertheless, through the quality of a woman's faith, hope, holiness and modesty, the bearing of children that special gift of the Spirit are being given and received. So crucial is this task that the salvation of the person to whom it is committed cannot be viewed as separable from it. All this can be proportionally affirmed without disproportionally denying that women are capable of serving holy orders.[165]

Psychological: Fear and insecurity create all sorts of destructive behavioral patterns that are passed, mostly unconsciously, from generation to generation through modeling. One of the important consequences of dysfunction is emotional emptiness. [166] This is a challenge all clergy face.

Philosophical: Religious bodies have a tendency to iconize their leaders, to set them on a pillar and turn them into Gods. We do this because we want to believe that our pastor embodies all the wonderful things that we feel we cannot be, or all the wonderful things that our parents could not be. We want to imagine that our pastor is the unstinting

[165] Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (San Francisco, California: HarperSanFrancisco, 1983), 43.

[166] Candacce R. Benyei, *Understanding Clergy Misconduct in Religious Systems* (New York: The Haworth Pastoral Press, 1998) 21.

caretaker that will never abandon us, never hurt us, never do wrong by us and always protect us.[167] My contextual location and personal history informs all that I do both positive and negative.

Sociological: When an acquaintance in some way resembles one or more of the powerful caretakers in our family (such as a father, brother or son), we tend to make, quite unconsciously assumptions about that person based on our experience with our family member. This is called projective identification. The leaders at church for women tend to represent male figures in their lives missing or not, father, husband or son.

Physical: Most times, growing requires taking apart our assumptions, even our treasured ones, about other persons in order to discover who they really are. It also requires discovering those parts of our own selves that we have denied or kept out of consciousness. In Romans 4:3-5, Paul the Apostle wrote, "Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit**.**"

Clinical: Many clergy both men and women often come from dysfunctional families, they are frequently referred to as "wounded healers." Unfortunately, in a small portion of cases, they remain wounded and can do more damage than healing},

Political: the silence that has occurred in our religious communities while atrocities have occurred within our church and around the world must end. We must have courage to speak truth to power whether to create inclusion in all facets of our environment, justice in our congregations and our communities at large. This is an arena

[167] Benyei, *Understanding Clergy Misconduct in Religious Systems*, 31.

ripe for women leadership because talented voices with the right intentions, should be evangelizing for the transformation of all.

In my case, many questions arose from the theological and psychological perspective, such as, How to completely surrender to God? How did I not know before what I know now? And how can I avoid living in spiritual ignorance going forward? What is my role as a leader and role model? What does complete surrender to God and my calling look like? How can it last? The application of surrendering is a discipline. It requires the need to study. We are looking to partner with God by praying and studying. Self reflection, introspection, ongoing humility and giving ourselves over are part of the exercise

God has bestowed gifts in each of us in order to create a purposeful result. God the Spirit is working in our time particularly to call women into significant ordained ministries, gifted ministries that will affect the life and ethos of the church in many positive ways now and in the years to come.[168] These gifts are unique to each one of us. If we do not use these gifts to better our and each other's lives, then we waste our purpose and destiny. Parker J. Palmer says in his book, "Let Your Life SPEAK," "Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you."[169]

We should always question what we can do for our society with our God-given gifts. It is to ask the right questions of our society so that we can hold it accountable to God's purposes. Women do their fair share of the work to make the world a better place.

[168] Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*, 46.

[169] Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life SPEAK* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 3.

This is evident at churches, at work, within community organizations, and in the home. However, they are limited in their scope because they are held back from leadership roles that would allow for the enhancement and transformation of all. Very few women live to their full potential because the contextual environment in which they reside does not allow for their abilities to be expressed. Whether intentionally or not, we do discount each other, we do take advantage.[170] As we look at the challenges in the world, we must seek justice; not just against violence but against the denial of one's full identity and ability to contribute to society. Women cannot be stuck in just 'the doing;' we must engage the world to include women in the leading and designing of strategy because our strength in those areas is not being utilized by the world at large. Robert Frost says: "The world is full of willing people, some willing to work, the rest willing to let them."[171] The role from servant to leadership pushes one out of their comfort zone. Not everybody is a leader. Furthermore, there are different levels of leadership. Where does each talent fit? Women are trained to be in the same role and not change, 'the servant role'.

One of this project' goals is to train women to new skill set of leadership. Our natural strength as caregiver is a skill set that is unique but needs to be maximized in the congregation. For example, a Bishop is a caregiver for many churches. This is a role that would utilize our gift. By not having these roles equally available to women, society says to women you are inept or unable. Women are always given the training to delegate down but not the training to grow to lead. Women need appropriate support systems from seminaries, community-based organizations, churches and a network in order to

[170] Mooney, *I Can't Believe She Did That,* 151.

[171] Thourlby, *The New Power Class,* Chapter 3.

deliver leadership, mentoring programs, sponsorship and education. This forum for authentic communication and mentorship will lead to emotionally, spiritually, psychologically and mentally prepared women for ministry. Thus, make leadership positions available for women to effect change in the church and in the world. Women have already developed the "you win/we all win" strategy of relating. Our passport consists of a set of strengths, attitudes and abilities that are perfectly suited to the emerging world that men will be able to look on with admiration for women's performances.[172] The road to greatness is for a few because of the cost and courage necessary to persevere and achieve. This project will look to help discern which road that the mentees need to follow. We intend to open the training door and remove the 'not good enough' consciousness and feeling of unworthiness experienced by too many women.

The risks and challenges that continue to linger for women and need special attention from this project are: the lack of networking. We need to develop and maintain relationships with governments, academic institutions, corporations and influential individuals to address our need for sponsorship. We need to impact the next generation of women in ministry. To do so, we need funding and ongoing financial support. This project will also encompass management of fundraising activities to continue to evolve this support system. We need to work with organizations that provide the leadership training for women and provide financial means. We need to create a mentoring program, which we plan to strategize about through roundtables and focus group discussions. This is to find ways to challenge the status quo. We need to learn to balance

[172] Thourlby, *Women The New Power Class*, chapter 19.

our uniqueness to give and receive. We must learn to give without adding new work to our load. We can learn to heal through leading. We need to work in unity with men. We need to develop and shape our leadership skills and styles. In the sphere of these mandates, we still need to wrestle with the issue of inclusivity which continues to be the uphill battle. There has been much research done on the interpretation of scriptures to show why women are kept out of leadership roles in the church. However, the outcome of this research in the Christian faith has also completely supported the intention of the gospel, which has always been to bring men and women into a full relationship of mutuality, and covenant love.

"Our English translations of words like 'headship' and 'helper' have given us the impression that super and subordination are normative in the earliest Christian tradition, an error long due for correction."[173] Women have aspirations, to not only be great but significant. Many want their work to leave a legacy; therefore, they need to promote their own stories. As Peggy Klaus says "Start bragging…, if you don't speak up for yourself, who will?"[174] As women we need to articulate and speak up about our talents so that society realizes the loss because of our absence. We must also learn to celebrate all victories small or big so that we are encouraged to forge ahead.

[173] Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*, 45.

[174] Peggy Klaus, *Brag! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It* (New York, Warner Business Books. 2003), 1.

CHAPTER IV

PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

I. GOAL ONE

Raise awareness of the lack of women in Leadership roles across faiths and introduce a potential solution to address this problem.

Strategy 1: Host a focus group roundtable and a seminar to engage in hermeneutical dialogues with women in ministry. (January and February 2011, Site Team and Me)

Strategy 2: Launch event with keynote speakers to set the context and define the mission and vision of a women's network that can address the issues around women in leadership. (April 2011, Site Team and Me)

Strategy 3: Combine role plays and case studies at the focus group roundtable and seminar to get questions and answers to where target community is located with such a topic. (January, February, April 2011, Site Team and Me)

Evaluation: 75% of attendees will fill out a questionnaire that will be distributed at both events to gather as much data to ensure that we have heard all ideas and feedback. (April 2011 Site Team and Me)

II. GOAL TWO

Design mission, vision and structure of a model network organization that can address 'women as pastor' project based on findings in Goal I. (March 2011 Site Team and Me)

Strategy 1: Identify and create a database of the talented educated women in ministry as potential candidate for leadership. (January 2011 and ongoing Me).

Strategy 2: Design a mentoring & leadership program for women on the road to ordination. (April 2011 Site Team, Advisor and Me)

Strategy 3: Create a list of external organizations that provide networking training development and support for women. (April 2011, Site Team and Me)

Evaluation: Have a database of 50 prepared women pastors to advocate positions for; over 50 relationships with pastoral opportunities so that we are where congregations come to when looking to train, hire and support women pastors; Ensure that network voice is prevalent in discussions around current events across the sciences such as political, spiritual, and sociological via 10 external organizations. (October 2011, Me)

III. GOAL THREE

Create a credible organization in which influential relationships facilitate corporate support and grants to fund the programs. (October 2011, Me)

Strategy 1: Create marketing and business plan to sell the idea to relevant corporations. (April 2011, Site Team, Me, Advisor)

Strategy 2: Partner with relevant organizations and enhance their effort while building a brand for this project. (January-October 2011, Site Team and Me)

Strategy 3: Build bridges within and across faiths. Work jointly to affect policies, processes and programs for inclusion of women across faiths wherever possible. (Ongoing 2011, Site Team and Me)

Evaluation: Balanced budget; revenue generation opportunities identified such as: (CD's, fee for seminars, published findings etc.); Become a member of the White House Project focused on women. (October 2011, Me)

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question I: Social and Scriptural

Is there proof that all scriptures are written by men? If yes, why was it necessary for men to write scripture to be skewed towards an exclusive patriarchal leadership movement? Can we outgrow that phenomenon now that we know and understand the loss when women's gifts are absent from world decisions? Why in the twenty first century do we still have women omitted or present in a very small scale in leadership roles? What scriptural themes, understandings, or passages have been neglected or misunderstood so as to contribute to the persistence of the problem? The lonely warrior women who breakthrough these obstacles, who awaits them once they do?

Research Question II: Economic, Ethical, Practical Methodology

Why have women accepted the value system traditionally passed to them by the previous generations of being less than? What are the potential solutions to breaking the glass ceiling? What is the pipeline that can unveil the talent pool to make women more aware of their strength and options? What difficulties or possibilities do this historical analysis present and who is addressing this current crisis? What new hermeneutical or critical methodological approaches can you see to shed better light on the situation? What are men's real fears?

Research Question III: Social, Political, Economic (Ethical)

How do we include female voices at the leadership level and break this unjust norm of society via an advocacy voice? What social, political, economic, and psychological factors contribute to this challenge/problem? Specifically indicate the nature and structure of racism, classism, sexism, environmental abuse, and homophobia, as these impacts this problem. How can men feel that they have what they need so they make way for women? Can women anchor their value system on God and partner with men as equals?

CHAPTER VI

EVALUATION PROCESS

The Process

The strategies to accomplish these goals are: the engagement of the Adviser and Site team for feedback on overall strategy, content and approval for final written proposal, and the creation of this ministry plan; a planned launch of the mission of this project to identify volunteers and stake holders.

WAM's Advisor:	Dave Asomaning {Founder of Synchro Mind a Leadership Development Company}
The Site Team:	Reverend Cynthia Jackson
	Minister Althea Bailey
	Minister Annette Thomas
	Monika Mitchell {author of "Spiritual Capitalism"}

The site team and members of the support team of this project, are very inspired by this very pertinent topic either as a man who coach women going through this challenging journey as well as well trained women reverend, ministers, authors whom God has called to ministry to deal with the challenges of expressing this call fully in their own context and congregation and mission. Their role in supporting and creating this focused and targeted project enables them to address this issue first hand by reviewing

and approving the findings of various researches. Although each site team member will be responsible for the overview and approval of the full context of the proposal before it is handed in, they will each have specific roles that will speak to their expertise and interest. Minister Thomas will focus on the editing and review of the proposal. Minister Bailey will focus on the financial needs and budget setting. Reverend Jackson will ensure that we build this project brick-by-brick and not try to build a cathedral overnight. Ms. Mitchell will help create the communication tools to market, connect and address the community. Mr. Asomaning will ensure the written work and strategy is ready to be approved and launched. Each team member will continuously provide input, support and feedback along the way through brainstorming sessions. We have appointed Evelyn Queen as the Administrative Assistant, to ensure that the documents are in good standing with the requirements in the Formatting Guide for the project. Three goals that the project will engage the site team to review are: Evolve the mission and vision of the project; Identify and structure the Leadership to assign and delegate task to stakeholders and review that assessments improvements are being addressed.

We met on Wednesday, May 14, 2010 to discuss the Assessment process.

The week of May 21, 2010, I received assessment from each site team member with individual feedback of each item discussed and agreed upon. They are listed below.

The Assessments

Knowledge and appreciation of one's own faith tradition - Attention

Although Nadja expresses an understanding of where she has traveled on her spiritual life journey, I believe that she continues to need to be grounded in her faith tradition. She has changed her places of worship a few times, and I believe that she should give attention to this area. Strategy one is to immerse herself in an internship in a

Christian church to emerge with a real experiential spiritual grounding. She does show a spiritual contentment in her demeanor that, in our view, reflects her knowing where she is in her own faith traditions and her desire to continue to grow and know more about her faith roots and other faith traditions as well. But, still has room to grow.

Knowledge and appreciation of the values of other faith traditions - Develop

Nadja has a deep appreciation for the various faith traditions of others. In the time that Nadja has openly shared her experiences and exposures to faith traditions other than her own, in this sharing, Nadja has shown an appreciation for the experiences and how each has helped her to grow and value the traditions. She can continue on that path of growth.

Ability to engage productively in dialogue - Continue

This is a particular area of strength for Nadja. She is open to the ideas of others and communicates very well without being judgmental or condescending. She is genuinely interested in the viewpoints of others. Nadja has no problem that we have seen thus far, that would deter her from being able to engage others in productive dialog. She is very capable of drawing people into dialog and being open to hear views that may not necessarily be her own.

Ability to interpret sacred texts - Attention

In regards to some texts, Nadja appears to be still in the phase of the exploration of sacred texts. Although she has the ability to interpret, she lacks the experience. Strategy is to continue to evolve through her gaining experience in teaching adult Bible study. Nadja is studying the original languages of sacred texts and she will continue to be a student because there seems to be unending thirst Nadja has to know more.

Ability as worship leader - Start

Nadja has no experience in this area. Strategy is that she should gradually work up through experience via an internship.

Facilitating transformation - Continue

Nadja embraces the prophetic assignment and communicates her understanding well. She has shared her various experiences, on a number of occasions she has noted who her spirit has known to share a truth or truths with someone that was totally unexpected by the recipient. I have observed that when Nadja communicates with others it is done with compassion and with sensitivity.

Ability as a Multifaith leader - Develop

Although Nadja has a wealth of experience as a leader, this is an area where some concentration needs to be placed. This is very important for her development. Therefore, her strategy to work at it in her D. Min, is the best way to do so. Nadja is truly a leader. With her many gifts, she is so unassuming one would not know the many things she has accomplished thus far in her life because of her servant leadership skills. We believe the best is yet to come.

Ability to serve as a Multifaith religious educator - Develop

Nadja has recently started teaching at the church setting. She is leading the Adult Bible Study classes at Grace UCC and shown potential in this area that will grow and develop with each opportunity.

Ability as counselor in a Multifaith context - Develop

Although Nadja has been providing counseling to others, she needs to be able to perform this duty.

Spiritual Leader - Attention

Nadja can benefit from a study on spiritual leadership. She needs to give attention to the spiritual disciplines. She is a communicator and one who seems to take very seriously her spiritual practices. We believe as Nadja continues on her on-going spiritual journey she will adopt and ground herself in spiritual disciplines to whatever extent necessary so that she can be the pastoral shepherd God is calling her to be.

Witness - Continue

Nadja excels in this area. She willingly shares her spiritual journey and bears witness with others as a help to another's spiritual growth.

Administrator- Continue

Nadja is a gifted administrator. The one thing to point out for this competency as well as point on her as an organizer is that Nadja must self-care to forefront as she moves ahead in her ministerial work.

Organizer- Continue

Nadja excels in this area. She is a seasoned organizer, an organizer extraordinaire. She is driven and again must rein herself in sometimes for self-care sake.

Professional- Develop.

Nadja is a seasoned, the consummate professional. She comes from a secular working background that required her to develop skills as a professional. These skills are skills she continues to carry and utilize today. We do not see that Nadja would have any problem adapting these skills for professional ministry.

CHAPTER VII

EVALUATION PROCESS

We will evaluate annually whether we are achieving the goals of this project by testing the process in various parts.

1. Ensure that survey materials disseminated from the questions and answers of at least four events are creating enough data for interpretation to assess the outcome of the research in either direction.
2. Create an approved list of at least fifty potential women Ministers to be mentored to Pastoral roles is achieved.
3. Achieve hosting at least five multiple effective and impactful discussions and in-depth interviews in one year across faith communities, to understand the dynamics and depth of the problem of exclusion for women in leadership in pastoral roles.
4. We need to generate demand for at least two events to refresh, retool, assessment spiritual tools and exchange ideas around leadership roles.
5. We need to receive from at least two institutions irrelevant of the faith, demand to deepen and integrate the demonstration of our inclusion project.
6. Establish statistical analysis to show percentage of recruiting and retention of women pastors for at least two denominations.

7. We need to get upfront funding to begin the project of at least ($62,500) a quarter of the amount needed in our budget by second quarter.

These evaluations procedures will provide specific measurable criteria to confirm that we are going in the right direction with this project and that our vision and mission can be achieved and sustained long term. By the end of one year as we go through these various assessments, the site team, advisor and I will re-evaluate the above processes to ensure that we can move forward or shift in direction.

The vision and mission if the results of our research prove it to be necessary, is to create a global, Multifaith and comprehensive women's intervention project strategy. As part of our research, we intend to host broad set of program events to inspire, empower and lead women in ministry to assess why they may not be achieving their full potential and assuming the role of leadership in the Church. We will assess in our research whether there need to be a role of advocacy as part of this project to continue to highlight the issues surrounding women in ministry, their lack of visibility in leadership roles in the Church community at large.

CHAPTER VIII

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

Competency 1.

WORSHIP LEADER: To become the pastoral shepherd that I am called to be.

Strategy 1: Fill in for all church functions, such as Preaching, communion, and special events such as: Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday etc.

Strategy 2: Do the invocation, reading of scripture and call to worship at church.

Strategy 3: Teach Adult Bible Study weekly.

Evaluation for competency 1:

1. I will get feedback from the Pastor in writing and church members on the result of my teaching and engaging.
2. I will test the result of my Bible study teaching based on what members take away by providing evaluation sheets.

Competency 2.

SPIRITUAL LEADER: Develop clearly spiritual purpose and identity and identify niche that will most benefit from talent and gifts. Furthermore, special attention to be given to spiritual disciplines.

Strategy 1. Attend conferences relevant to this topic.

Strategy 2. Take courses and workshop to define my language and refine skills.

Strategy 3. Assist the Pastor at church on house calls and emergencies for members.

Evaluation for competency 2:

1. Get feedback from Pastor in writing and church members on the result of my engaging.
2. Gather a network in this field for continuous mentorship and feedback.
3. Review with site teams' regularly on improvement in this area and record their observations.

Competency 3.

MULTIFAITH RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR: To build bridges across faith.

Strategy 1: Visit the services of other faiths

Strategy 2: Attend conferences relating to Multifaith teaching

Strategy 3: Deliver sermon using inclusive language

Evaluation for competency 3:

A. Written feedback from the pastor and open feedback church members on result of my involvement.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

TIMELINE

Date	
July/August/Sept 2010	Site Team meetings / Complete Proposal / Identify 250 Bibliography Resources
October 2010	Deliver proposal for approval
November 2010	NYTS Project approved. Research moving ahead for period of 6 months.
January 2011	Phase I (3 months research completed) Project Review. Meet with Site Team and Advisor. Meet with Project Mentor – Dr. Lundy
January - February 2011	Host focus group I (Site Team and Me)
January - April 2011	Host focus group II as a roundtable (Site Team and Me)
January - October 2011	Partner with relevant organizations (Site Team & Me)
January 2011 - Ongoing	Identify talented educated women and create database. (Me)
March 2011	Design mission, vision and structure of a model. (Site Team and Me)
April 2011	Complete Goal I (Site Team and Me)
April 2011	Phase II (6 months research completed) Project Review. Meet with Site Team and Advisor. Meet with Project Mentor -- Dr. Lundy
April 2011	Design a mentoring & leadership program (Site Team, Advisor and Me)
April 2011	Create a list of external organizations. (Site Team and Me)
April 2011	Create marketing and business plan (Site Team Advisor & Me)
September, 2011	Draft of completed project to Dr. Lundy & Dr. Russell for approval
October 2011	Complete Goal II (Me)
October 2011	Create a credible organization (Me)
October 2011	Balance budget, revenue and opportunities (Me)
October 2011	Complete Goal III (Me)
January 2012	Finalize project books and presentation materials
March 2012	Oral presentation of project
May 2012	Doctorate of Ministry Graduation
Ongoing	Build bridges across faith. (Me)

APPENDIX 2

PROGRAM BUDGET– 2010 - 2011

Date	Activity	Target Audience	Vendor	Cost	Total
Events	**Seminars**	**Ministers**	**Church**	**$ 6,000**	**$ 6,000**
Marketing	**Handouts**	**Relevant members**	**TBD**	**$ 4,000**	**$ 4,000**
Website	**Blogs/Site**	**Everyone**	**TBD**	**$ 12,000**	**$ 12,000**
Staff	**Exec. Director Accountant Admin. Asst. Program Mgr.**	**Managing non-profit**	**N/A**	**$200,000**	**$200,000**
Infrastructure	**Rent/Supplies**	**Headquarter**	**Church**	**$ 18,000**	**$ 18,000**
Research	**Publications**	**Relevant members**	**External**	**$ 5,000**	**$ 5,000**
Conferences	**Attending**	**Staff**	**External**	**$ 5,000**	**$ 5,000**

TOTAL **$ 250,000**

There are many potential Sponsors that are specifically focused in the area of women empowerment. Their goals are to support the promotion, inclusion and participation of women in all aspect of leadership in the world. Organizations such as “Training Women in Ministry” and “Faith Based Grants International Support” are a few of many that support financially through grants and other resources which are potential funding sources we will seek guidance, partnership and support.

The financial request will be a $250,000 investment initially for Phase I which is for the first year. We will require two years of funding to strengthen our core capacity, invigorate programs and engage people in ministry. We will also solicit grants to support our technology infrastructure needs such as: build programming/software; staff needs such as the hiring of a Fund Development and Marketing staff person. We will also leverage supporters and partners to help in our infrastructure development.

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APPENDIX II

WAM FIRST YEAR BUDGET

Date	Activity	Target Audience	Vendor	Cost	Total
Events	Seminars	Ministers	Church	$ 6,000	$ 6,000
Marketing	Handouts	Relevant members	TBD	$ 4,000	$ 4,000
Website	Blogs/Site	Everyone	TBD	$ 12,000	$ 12,000
Staff	Exec. Director Accountant Admin. Asst. Program Mgr.	Managing non-profit	N/A	$300,000	$300,000
Infrastructure	Rent/Supplies	Headquarter	Church	$ 18,000	$18000
Research	Publications	Relevant members	External	$ 5,000	$ 5,000
Conferences	Attending	Staff	External	$ 5,000	$ 5,000
		TOTAL		**$350,000**	

APPENDIX III

WAM LOGO

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